Edmond Kay.
Memoirs ; vol I.

Memoirs

Galleries

Of

Memory

Edmond Ukry

Book I.

G A L L E R I E S

O F

M E M O R Y

DEDICATED to the three women
who inspired me to the best
that I have done in my life --
my Mother, my Wife, my Daughter.

GALLERIES OF MEMORY

BOOK ONE

I	My Birth	1
II	The Family	3
III	The House	14
IV	The Town	30
V	Government	33
VI	The People and their Occupations	41
VII	Cultural Activities, Recreation and Festivities	61
VIII	Social Life	67
IX	Religious Life	69
X	Education	126
XI	Play	135
XII	Earliest Impressions of Serious Family Events	140
XIII	My High School Days	148
XIV	At the Crossroads of Decision	166

Preface

At the outset, I want to state that it would be presumptuous on my part to think that in writing GALLERIES OF MEMORY I am contributing to the world something of literary value. The story of my life runs parallel with that of many immigrants of the 80's and 90's of the last century. America then, more than any other land, attracted Europeans, especially Germans, Austrians, Irish and Italians.

I was one of the many small town boys who saw little or no opportunity in their homeland. The abundance in the New World was great and alluring, but did not always measure up to the air castles built in the minds of adventurous young explorers. A cartoon of that time showed an immigrant, just off the ship, kicking away a gold coin lying on the sidewalk, remarking, "Can't you wait till I've rested up? I won't stoop to pick you up now."

There was in all of Europe the matter of long compulsory military service and a continuous threat of war.

My story is neither unique nor sensational, nor does it resemble the Horatio Alger type, but it has given me an opportunity to set down certain facts that all too often are forgotten in families because they were never recorded. It has always annoyed me to meet folks who could not pronounce or even remember the name of a parent's birthplace.

I know that some of my children and grandchildren will, with patience, browse through these pages. It is not my intention to

develop in them a spirit of ancestry worship. But if anything I have told them will give them a clearer vision in their doubts, increased strength in their purposes and more comfort in their disappointments, then I shall not have written in vain.

For my many sins, I ask forgiveness. May the reader find it in his heart to give me the benefit of the doubt in weighing my demerits against the acts done under more inspired impulses.

We who witness so much mechanical and conventional demonstration of sentiment that should be too sacred to be uttered parrot-like, may become too reserved in the verbal expression of our own feelings. If I have avoided the "dearie-darling-honey" way, I trust that in or between my lines can be read and felt the great affection that I bear my beloved family, also the debt of gratitude that I owe to it, as well as to my many friends, my country, and to the good Lord who has implanted within me a capacity for love of mankind, a passion for right, and a sense of responsibility to the world.

April 23, 1946 Edmond Uhry

CHAPTER I: MY BIRTH

"It's another boy!" called Lisette the midwife, who in the few preceding years had attended the arrival of three older brothers. It was five o'clock on a Thursday afternoon, the twenty-third day of April, 1874, at Ingweiler (Elsass) orIngwiller (Bas-Rhin) before 1871 and after November 1918. Those who have lived in a town of about twenty-two hundred souls, where Thursday was the weekly market day, when products were brought in from the neighboring farms, mostly by women who at the same time took home with them the things they required, know the hustle and excitement of that day.

Thursday was a school holiday, probably inaugurated to release the children for home assistance. Thursday, the day when preparations were started for the Sabbath; and of all the days of the week, the fourth son of the Uhrys had to make his entrance then! If there were any ill feelings, they were soon forgotten as the choice of a "pretty name for the baby" would indicate. Following traditional rule, it was necessary to go back for my Hebrew name to that of my paternal great-great-grandfather, Pheibus, or Feiss, or Schrack, meaning "light." My mother, apparently a stickler for pretty names, refused the proposed Ferdinand, Fernand, Felix, and chose Edmond (this from the Greek, meaning "defender of happiness").

However, for all ritual purposes, it was Pheibus.

The family then lived in the upper part of Marze Michel's, a house built on the edge of the "Graben," the dried up moat that in earlier centuries was a part of the town's defenses.

In the 15th Century this land was the property of the Grafen von Hanau-Lichtenberg, with their main seat at Lichtenberg, in the strongly fortified castle there. The ruins of the fortress still exist. In my youth, this was the goal for school excursions as well as a point of interest for tourists attracted by the sagas of romance, strife and horror connected with them. One of the sensational spots in the crumbling, oft-bombarded fortress was the dungeon where one of the rulers incarcerated his contending brother, to subsist on dry bread to be moistened only by the water that seeped through the rocky walls, until he finally died of starvation. As a warning to future pretenders, the history and scenes of agony were chiselled in the walls.





Fannie Klein Uhry

Samuel Uhry

Copies from Photographs by Gerschel
at Strasbourg
about 1869?

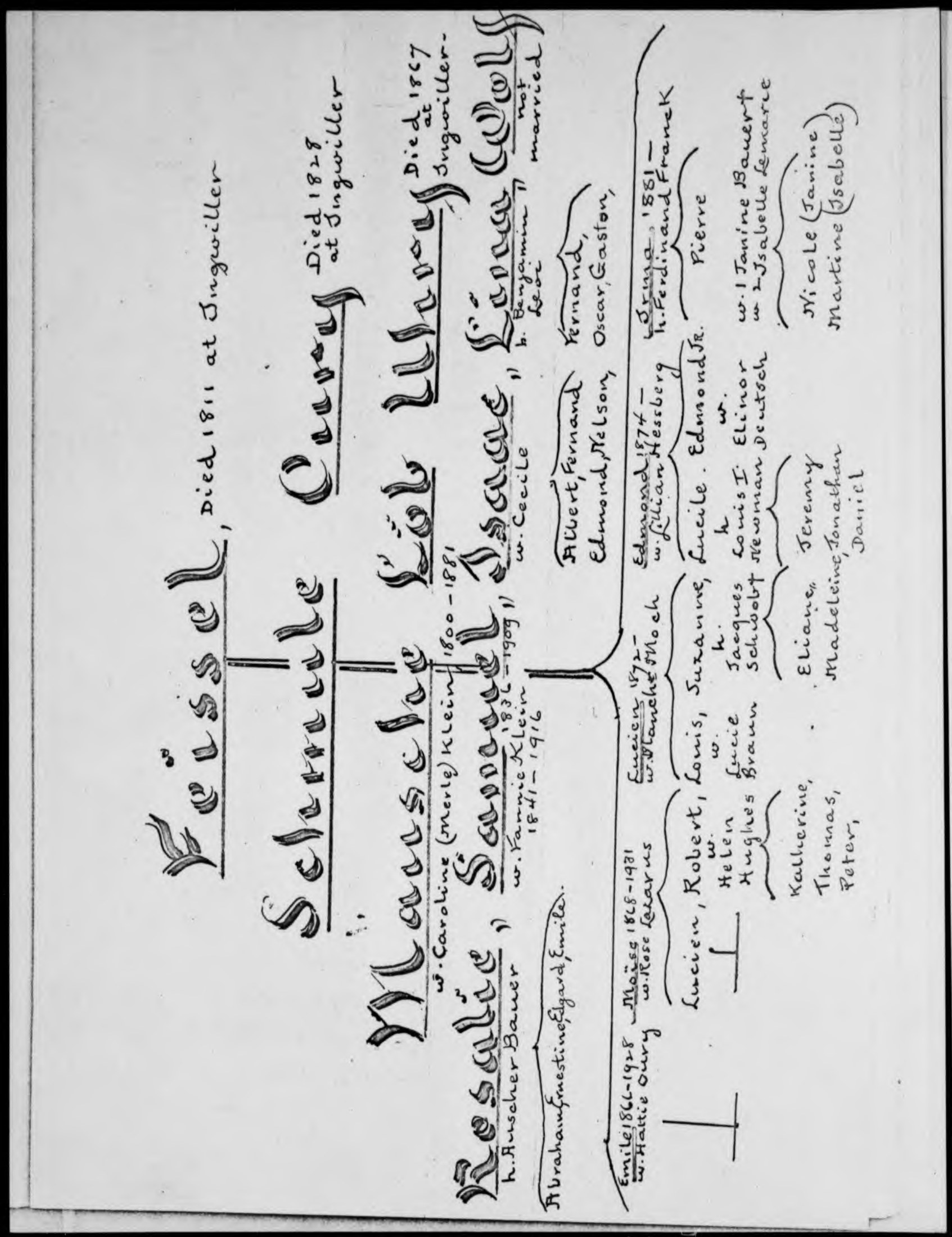
CHAPTER II: THE FAMILY

At my birth, my father Samuel, or Schmule, was thirty-eight years old. He was born January 13, 1836. My mother Fannie, nee Klein, was thirty-three. She was born March 24, 1841. My brother Emile was seven and a half, born October 28, 1866. My brother Moise was six, born March 16, 1868. My brother Lucien was eighteen months old, born July 26, 1872.

Our sister Irma (Mrs. Ferdinand Franck) followed on March 23, 1881. I insert here a copy of the Uhry family tree, and a more limited geneology of the Klein-Weiss, mother's family.

My father's father, Moise Uhry (Moshe Leb) died in 1867 at the age of sixty-seven. I never knew him. He was one of ten children. I heard from many sides that he was a very religious man, both in form and practice, serving God and man in a sacrificial manner. I was told that he was called to the stricken of all faiths to pray for and with them, and had found himself at one time in the embarrassing situation of being called a healer. He apparently had no ambition for such glory, or else he could have annointed himself the founder of an early type of Jewish Science.

My father's mother Merle, nee Klein, born in Bischheim, Alsace, in 1800, lived until 1881. I remember a little about her. She was stern, stubborn and had the courage of her



convictions. I had to go to her on the Sabbath morning and on the holidays to be blessed or bensched, a ceremony followed by the distribution of gifts of fruit, nuts or cake (Schabbos-Obst). This was also the time for the payoff of some punishment due me, from which I had escaped during the week. If the succeeding generations show traces of religio-social tendencies blended with stiff-necked tenacity, one may look for the sources in the lives of my paternal grandparents.

My father's eldest sister, Rosalie, was married to Auscher Bauer of Romanswiller, near Saverne, approximately thirty-five miles from my home town. A bus-railroad trip, with waiting periods at two junctions, took about four hours, but my later four-day-trips between New York and the Pacific Coast were as a run around the block by comparison. For such a journey when we made it on rare and special occasions, we took along all sorts of coldcuts, wurst, cheese and what not to guard us against starvation, should the "Bummelzug" break down en route. Romanswiller had great attraction for me, and in my high school days I was allowed to spend a part of my vacations there. The town had about three hundred and fifty inhabitants, with a matching amount of Misthaufen (dunghills). The inhabitants were proud of these. Weren't they the best evidence of their wealth in cattle and livestock? This was probably the reason for placing these depositories in front of the houses, while the gardens were in the obscure rear. My

uncle, his brother, and two sons of each, comprised a prosperous firm of cattle dealers.

The place attracted me because there was a cousin of my own age there, who initiated me in the performance of the chores around these stockyards, as well as the work connected with the clover fields and meadows, from the cutting of their products to the storing of them as hay. These vacations were always arranged so I would be on hand for the "Kermess Festival" in the neighboring city of Wasselonne. This three-day event, with its alluring array of candies, Lebkuchen, colorful novelties, carousels, shooting-galleries, dance-halls, would consume most of the ten marks ($2.50) that I had received as traveling expense. On my return home, usually penniless, an accounting had to be given, and I was always branded a reckless spendthrift.

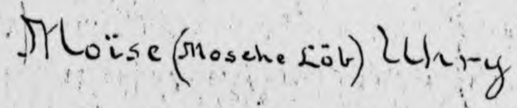
The Bauers had a daughter Ernestine, married to Edmond Oury of St. Die, a second cousin; also three sons, Abraham, Edgard, and Emile.

Father's other sister was Leah, called Lina. She was married to Benjamin Levi, who taught school in our native town and later at Obernai, a larger city, near Selestat in Alsace. Aunt Lina was a philosopher, alert, well educated, frank and courageous in her views and actions, and the whole family, all but one, sought and followed her advice in most things. She clashed most frequently with her younger brother, who bore great resemblance to her physically and spiritually..





Merle Klein Ulry



Moïse (Moseche Löb) Ulry

copied from Photographs by Gerschel
Strasbourg
about 1855

They both called a spade a spade, and each other -- Lord knows what! I spent several vacations at Obernai and recall vividly the excursions we made from there to Odilienberg and the well known convent on its thickly wooded summit. Later the Levi family moved to Strasbourg. Of the three sons, the oldest, Fernand, was a pharmacist at nearby Bischwiller; Oscar and Gaston built up a very large cotton goods, linen and upholsterers' supply business at Strasbourg. Fernand, a bachelor, died in his late fifties. His brothers had to evacuate Strasbourg with the approach of the Nazi hordes in 1940, and as I am writing this, Oscar is, alas, among the many missing French Jews that were deported in January 1943.

Father's younger brother, Isaac, was a teacher and had a position at the Lycee at Bordeaux, where he served over fifty years. He was an officer of the Legion of Honor, and was otherwise honored by his government for distinguished services. I remember him best by his beautiful handwriting and the interesting letters that were stored in our garret. He also madea deep impression on me by his annual gift of a large barrel of Bordeaux wine. He had four sons -- Albert, Fernand, Edmond, and Nelson. I met Fernand and Edmond in Paris on my first return visit in 1899. The elder, Fernand, was then a young architect who took part in the designing of the Palais de l'Industrie, erected for the Paris Exposition of 1900. Edmond was a lieutenant in the French army, graduate

of St. Cyr (the French West Point). He resigned his post in resentment of the bigotry of France in opposing the reopening of the Dreyfus case in 1899. I never knew their parents.

Father's youngest brother, Eugene Wolf Uhry, was a young man of adventure who saw the world and in early middle age was willing to lead a life of retirement in Romanswiller, the village described above, living in the home of his sister Rosalie. He was a bachelor of strong convictions, had a well developed sense of justice, a quick temper, and a good share of the stubbornness that often accompanies the two first named characteristics. I like to think of him as the champion in defense of a simple peasant who chanced into a "snooty" cafe in our town. This man was mocked by some of the regulars who resented his presence there. Uncle, feeling the humiliation that was heaped upon this peaceful peasant, squared matters with the chief mockers so that one of the town's richest and most important citizen went home with half of his well trained beard missing.

At the beginning of the Franco-Prussian war (1870) the family opposed Uncle's wish to join the Francs-tireurs. This was a group of men who enlisted for the duration of the war. The regular French army was recruited by the drawing of numbers. The term of service was seven years. Many able-bodied

men escaped military service by good luck in this lottery. He who drew a fatal low number had the option of buying a substitute for himself. This replacement had to be drawn from the physically fit, who had already satisfied their own obligation, and the limited supply of such men forced the price of hire to a point beyond the reach of the people of small means. It is hard for us at this stage to understand such an undemocratic arrangement.

Uncle, together with one Maurice Baer of our town, decided to act in the matter of enlistment despite family objections, and the two disappeared together with such loose copper and silver change as was lying around the respective households. Maurice had an opportunity in the army to learn something about engineering and geology, and at the end of the war, entered the employ of the Rothschilds, eventually becoming managing director of their oil interests in Russia and Rumania. The family then was justly proud of this runaway.

Uncle went to Brazil, where in the diamond business, he accumulated enough to retire at an early age. At his demobilization from the army in 1871, he was permitted to keep his uniform including a pellerine (red lined cape). Practical use of this cape was made when it was retailored into my first suit in 1878. It was of black broadcloth and in quality outshone all the tuxedos and formals I wore in later years.

My first suit is only a memory, but a perfect diamond

that Uncle sent me in the year 1900 forms the center of my wife's platinum brooch. As far as I know I was his only beneficiary in my branch of the family. At his death all had been bequeathed to the children of his oldest sister. He was a patriotic Frenchman. On one of my visits I brought him a Gorham silver match box. In hardly visible type this was engraved "Made in Germany." Uncle's eagle eye spied this mark of origin and he refused to touch or own this German "dreck" (dirt).

I recall a great thrill at finding an old letter in our garret. This letter was written by him to his mother at Le Havre, before his sailing for Brazil. In it was a vivid description of the ocean as he saw it from that port. The rushing, foamy current that drove the wheels of the flour mills in our town and kept me fascinated for hours at a time, lost part of their attraction after the picture of huge waves that had formed in my boyish fantasy. Altogether Uncle Wolf impressed me greatly. He died at Strasbourg, where his remains are buried.

My mother's father, Lazard Klein, was born in Ingwiller and died there in 1882 at the age of seventy-four. I recall him as a tall, stately man, who was bedridden for most of the time I knew him. He had hurt his foot in some way not known to me, and diabetes brought on a gangrenous condition. He was in the flour and grain business and at one time was the matzoh-baker for our countryside.

His wife, Jeannette Weiss Klein, was born in Ingwiller and died there at the age of seventy-nine. She lived alone in her house in the Hintergasse. My brothers and cousins shared with me the duty of chaperoning and guarding grandmother on winter nights and sleeping in her house. Most of us were goose-pimpled heroes andwould have been of little use if the spooks ofour imagination had ever dared venture out of the mysterious nooks and chimneys of her old house. I got along well with her, except in the berry season. Behind her house there was a garden, reached through a wing that served as a poultry coop. Luscious gooseberries and currants were too tempting for me not to take the long chance of making a forced entry to the garden. A hatching hen would sometimes give the alarm, or a chivalrous rooster would crow "stop thief!"

On Schabbos morning when we had to go to her to be bensched, she was usually in the midst of reading from the "Tzinnah Rinna" the alliteration of the day's Torah portion. This could not be interrupted by any speech except the word "aye." With this monosyllable and some gestures, she managed to hold court and mete out punishment for any of my trespasses of the week without being mavzick (interruption of prayer by ordinary speech). The Schabbos-Obst, however, was not withheld, and slates were cleaned for the week.

My mother was the oldest daughter and assumed all responsibility and care for grandmother when it was discovered that other members of the family had, with and without permission,

dissipated the fortune that grandfather had left her. She spent her last years in peace and serenity under the roof of her daughter's house.

Another daughter, Sara, was married at Winzenheim, near Colmar, to Leon Bloch. She had three daughters and a son, and frequently came on visits, bringing one or two of the children with her. It was she who discovered the disappearance of grandmother's securities and valuables. The Bloch family about 1888, migrated to Galveston, Texas, where Leon Bloch had a brother. The driving power and managing ability of Aunt Sara in a very short time bore fruit in the new home until, alas, the Galveston flood in September 1900 swept away all that they possessed except an undaunted courage and a close family adhesion that gave them the strength to start life anew in Cincinnati. The help and guidance given them by my brothers and the Joseph Lazarus family soon put them back on their feet. Their children Coralie, Cecile and Maurice contributed to the family budget with their earnings; Irma, the youngest, finished school and then also helped along.

Coralie, Mrs. Sam Reisfeld, now lives in New Orleans. Cecile, Mrs. Leon Levy, of Mexico City and Paris, and Maurice, alas, were taken by death in recent years. Irma, after her mother's death, went to Paris with her father and shared Cecile's home there. Her father died at the ripe age of ninety-three. I possess and cherish some of the letters written to me in his last years. He was very orthodox and observed Jewish law and

custom most rigidly. Irma and the Levys with their two sons escaped the Nazi horror and came back here in 1942. Irma, since Cecile's death, lives in New Orleans.

Mother's oldest brother, Isaac, lived in Ingwiller. He never did well inanything and was a constant cause for worry to the family. He and his wife Melanie both died only a few years apart, leaving five sons -- Maurice, Sylvain, Lucien, Lazard, and Alfred. The four oldest were able to support themselves. Three had positions in Paris; another, Lucien, made a livelihood in the hometown, but died of typhoid in his twenties. Alfred, the youngest, was taken care of by my parents. I saw him last in Paris in 1931. The others I did not see again after I left home in 1891.

Leopold was mother's youngest brother. He never succeeded at anything. As a boy, in his late teens, he was sent to New York but he didn't stay very long. On his return, he had to serve three years in the German army. He was married to Jeanne Bloch from Schirrhofen, a splendid wife and mother. After his wife's fortune had dwindled away in various ways and enterprises, he came with her and three daughters to Brooklyn. His industrious daughters and devoted wife built a fine home here despite the lack of his cooperation. Aunt Jeanne had a well-deserved, beautiful sunset of life. She reached the ripe age of eighty-two. Coralie, Mrs. Fishbine; Sophie, Mrs. Abraham; their husbands and children and youngest sister Germaine, kept

house together in a large Brooklyn residence, and despite the nomadic wanderings of the family from Ingwiller to Schirrhofen to Strasbourg and Brooklyn, are outstanding as a fine American home unit.





Jeannette Weiss Klein

Lazard Klein

copied from Photographs by Victor Vogt,
Ingwiller
about 1865

CHAPTER III: THE HOUSE

The circumstance of my addition to the family probably advanced the idea of buying a house on the main street. That became our home until our mother's death in 1916.

It was one of the larger residences in the town, and the architecture was the typical French style of the early 19th Century. It was of stone, interlaced with wooden beams. Over a deep cellar were two stories of living quarters, above them and under a sloping gabled roof were two floors of garrets. I do not know whether this spacious house was bought to promote plans my father might have had to change his occupation, or whether the facilities were the inspiration for the plans.

As the oldest son, my father had joined his father in the business of trading in cattle and real estate in a territory about twenty-five miles from home, making the towns of Schorbach and Bitche, the latter a fortress of historic renown, their headquarters. This meant leaving home before sunrise on Sundays, stopping at several towns on the way, and reaching Schorbach on foot, at the end of the day. The Jewish population in that territory was sparse, and a strict observance of the dietary laws compelled them to do their own cooking. The use of meat was out of the question, and they lived chiefly on dairy dishes and such home-cooked food as was left over from

the Sabbath meals. They maintained households in both places, and had stables and barns for their livestock. Thursday was the day for the return trip. The roads were hilly, winding through the wooded outrunners of the Vosges Mountains, and were snow covered most of the winter.

After my grandfather died in 1867, business was in a state of gradual liquidation for about ten to fifteen years. I can still recall the resentment I felt when in 1889 I tried without success to collect outlawed debts and to dispossess tenants, who not only had paid no rent, but claimed ownership under squatters' laws then on the statute books of the land. Their contention was upheld by the Court.

The risk of change to another business must have looked very trifling and the Epicerie-Mercerie under our own roof must have resembled paradise by comparison with the former business. Epicerie is French derived from "epice" meaning spices, and the business of that name deals in them as well as sugar, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, rice, sago, dried peas and beans, molasses, vinegar, oils, cheese, herring, sardines, etc. Mercerie is from the Latin "merciarius" meaning merchandise, with special reference to findings and notions required by dressmakers as well as thrifty housewives, in the making and maintaining of the wearing apparel of the family. In my father's business this took in spool cotton, yarns of wool and silk for knitting, darning, tatting and crocheting; hooks and eyes, needles, pins, shoelaces,

shoe buttons, tobaccos, pipes, matches, and dozens of other items.

A discriminating clientele and keen competition made it necessary to expand this assortment so that sugar, for example, had to be carried in at least six forms -- domino, dice, granulated, powdered, brown, and loaf sugar, also Zucker-kandel, rock candy, which was an all-important household remedy for colds. With all this, we would miss a sale when some ambitious pastry cook was shopping for two cents' worth of multi-colored sugar crystals to decorate a birthday cake. In coffees, we had to carry three qualities, each one in green, roasted, and ground; or nine items. To these we must add two kinds of chicory, used to reinforce the coffee brew. It is difficult to reconcile the extensive assortment of these items with the actual sales turnover in them. Only the well-to-do and high livers could avail themselves of luxuries like sugar and coffee. Molasses took the place of sugar in most of the households. The standard pay for a day's labor of twelve to fifteen hours was thirty cents. Sugar per pound sold at from eight cents for loaf sugar to fifteen cents for the powdered. Coffee was priced at from twenty cents per pound for the lowest grade in green to fifty cents for the roasted or ground.

Despite the limited purchasing power of the population of about three thousand in town and vicinity, I can count sixteen dealers competing for the customers' good will and

patronage. It must have been a difficult and uncertain way of gaining the livelihood for a family of six. The necessity of finding other means of support must have been evident and led to the expansion of my father's commercial enterprises.

Each one of us at an early age had his assignment of work, ranging from coffee grinding and delivery to stock-keeping and selling. I reached the height of my responsibility when I became thirteen. My two oldest brothers had gone to the United States, and the third one was studying at the Rabbinical Seminary at Colmar. I was a student in the Real-Gymnasium at Bouxwiller, and in my spare time, tended store. To this day I remember my practice in self-control, when a customer first asked for a litre of petroleum and then for a half pound of loaf sugar or for a herring, roe not milk, that had to be fished out by fork, examined, and wrapped. The transfer of the smell of the petroleum or the herring B.O. to the loaf sugar or to my written lesson, that was interrupted by the business, would have been calamitous.

Individual sales were in small amounts, profits in this super-competitive field were close, the annual turnover of the diversified stock was low. Many customers were arrogant and cruelly exacting, a spirit probably unconsciously transplanted to their young brats running errands who had a subtle way of letting you know that they had the right of choice in

giving their patronage, and that they were not averse to a little bribe, ranging from a piece of sugar to a handful of almonds. Some of these gamins (brats) especially coveted the opportunity of getting items like petroleum or vinegar, which were kept in a place away from the main store. In our absence they would not exactly steal anything, but dip a finger in the molasses barrel. This petty theft was not as serious as the sinners' occasional negligence in replacing the lid, especially in the summertime, when watchful ants stupidly put their feet into the exposed mess to meet their untimely death. Their surviving family could say that not only life, but death, too, could be sweet.

Next to the selection of a certain herring of definite size and sex, the sale of loaf sugar furnished the most frequent cause for vexation. Loaf sugar was molded in a cone about thirty-six inches high over a base of about nine inches. It was the fixed idea of some customers that the bottom of the cone was the sweetest, and our sugar supply was often bottomless. One had to chop off the approximate cut and very often the break would be so that the scale showed a weight slightly above the wanted amount. This would start a performance of duo-chiseling, in the abstract on one side and concrete on the other. We upheld principle in these cases, sooner than be taken advantage of by the buyer who expected the surplus weight

without additional pay. The thumbnail on my left hand is a triplicate, and the family was suspicious of any member of its sales-force who had his original thumbnail.

I could never explain the choice of location of the store. All others in the town faced the street, ours was on the side of the house, going into a narrow, short lane. To fifty people passing the front, only one would go through this deserted thoroughfare. The appearance of the house, with its front intact was, no doubt, deemed of greater importance than show windows. The displays in all the stores were rather uniform and rarely changed. There was a representation of the many articles carried. With the arrival of the matjes herring, one of them was added to the display and the poor fish dangled there until change of guard was held on arrival some months later of a regiment of his smoked brothers and sisters from Holland. Big glass jars of hard candies, mostly in the form of drums and animals, fascinated the young that on very special occasions only, were sparingly treated to this luscious delicacy. No work or demand for service was too much when the reward expected or promised was some of this candy.

A story showing the great stimulus that desire may have on the spirit of invention or resourcefulness is the one about a neighbor's little boy who was given money by his uncle to get some cigars. He came back with a bag, explaining that they have no more cigars; they only have candy.

As an example of the will to render service for remuneration that would gratify this craving for sweets, I recall the instance of a playmate and myself offering to watch the horse of a transient while he would go into the inn for a drink. We watched the restless horse for hours. When the thirsty traveller returned, supported by the innkeeper, he had only five Pfenning left (one and one-quarter cents) and this was our tip. My partner and I, faced by the dilemma of equal division of the earnings, decided to convert them into Sussholz (licorice wood). In a way this was the predecessor of chewing gum, and while the "flavor would not last" as it does in present day Wrigley's, the cud of the ancestor by far outstayed the duration of any present day wad of gum.

Nothing remained secret very long. When my family heard about this and disapproved of both the manner of acquisition of the money as well as the investment thereof, I was in for the usual chastisement. Perhaps they were slightly annoyed that our purchase was made from a competitor.

Some of the pleasantest events inconnection with the store were the visits of travelling salesmen. Most of these were received like guests. They spread the news of the country, good and bad, true and exaggerated, and we hung -- eyes, mouth, and ears wide open -- to every word they uttered. We had no railroad until 1888, and in our isolation, were so news-starved that every item was relished. An order was placed, whether the

goods were needed or not. Our parents were impartial buyers but we, the little kibitzers, had our own likes and dislikes. Many things influenced us, but the deciding factor was the impression made with the Christmas present to the family. The one whose firm sent four cotton-wrapped oranges was more popular with us than he representing the sender of one Lebkuchen.

When one of them sent two tangerines, my brother asked him on his next visit whether their oranges would have young ones soon again. This brother was in later years the head of a very large business in New York, and his early commercial success was in the field of selling. Reflecting on the different techniques employed by these men, I would say that the advantages of observation were real and constructive.

In the small-town housholds of that day the commercial and family life were so closely merged that we will have to come back to the business side from time to time.

Our house was built so that three families could share it. We rented out three rooms and kitchen to families of two adults; and for several years to a bachelor physician.

One wonders about the necessity of two floors of garrets. In some instances, garrets were used as living quarters. In our case they were storerooms holding the accumulation of things inherited, bought at auctions, and hundreds of items with much sentimental and little intrinsic value, ranging from old letters and books to a neighbor's sword, a

souvenir of the Napoleanic Wars. Legitimate storage was that of firewood, set up in orderly fashion, forming walls, a year's supply for three or four stoves. Another was a separate space, barred and locked, for it contained the change of dishes and kitchen utensils for Passover. Still another was a section equally protected by lock and key against intrusion, for in it, in hay or straw, pears and apples were kept for the days when only dried fruits were available. Only he who has tasted the almost black-ripened winter pears or the hard russet apples can appreciate the cautious dispensation of those rare fruits.

To offset the impression the writer must have given, and will continue to give, by his emphasis on sweets and fruits and food in general, he wishes to record the delight that was his when he was allowed to go through books, letters, school lessons accumulated, especially those of my Uncle Isaac Uhry, born in 1838, and educated at higher schools of learning. Then also the letters of Uncle Eugene Wolf Uhry. After his demobilization from the French army he went to Pelotas in Brazil and his correspondence from there bore the excitement of a dime novel. Despite its daytime fascination, when night came, the garret was shunned as if it were haunted. I doubt that anyone besides my father ever went there alone at night.

Another interesting spot, a sort of annex to the house, was a room reached from the main foyer, called the "Stall." The former owner had kept sheep and chickens there. This was

our business storeroom for petroleum, reserve merchandise and also the bulkier household utensils such as brooms, shovels, and the Stobchen. This was a tin apparatus resembling a wash boiler. Charcoals would smolder slowly so that cooked food could be kept warm for long periods. There, in willow cages, we temporarily kept some live chickens around holiday time. Here too, in winter, two or three geese were fattened (gestopfte ganse) with maize corn that was stuffed down their throats. The supply of goose fat, the enlarged liver, the breasts and Grieben (the skin of the goose after fat has been boiled out) lasted through the winter, preserved in their own fat. The manufacturers of pate de foie-gras offered high prices for the livers, but nothing was too good for the Uhrys, hence no sale.

The furnishings of the house were many, some new at marriage, some inherited, some acquired at auctions. Many periods were represented, especially in the variety of beds. The pieces de resistance in our home were the secretaire, several etageres and consoles. The secretaire is a drop-front desk. The bottom has several drawers and behind the drop are small ones, also some compartments for the safe keeping of valuables and all sorts of trinkets. The present-day budget system was not in popular use then, but the orderly instinct of the heads of the house made every little drawer have a meaning all its own. In one of them the taxes, in the other the cost of spring painting, in still another, school tuition was

accumulated. The most fascinating of all the contents was a little bag holding four United States gold dollars, given to my brothers and me by my father's cousin, Alexandre Haas, when he was on a visit to the old home from Haysville, Louisiana, a town named after him.

Heating of the house was by wood-burning stoves. The aristocrats among them were two porcelain stoves, shiny white, with gold brass binders. They had the triple facility for cooking and warming up of food and general heating. A pot of steaming coffee on the top kept the air moist and the nerves steady.

The cellar was not only the storeroom for wines and liquors, but its refrigerating qualities made it a good place for the year's supply of potatoes, preserves, and other provisions.

A space between ours and our neighbor's properties, eighteen or twenty feet wide, led to an out-building. This could have been used as a barn or stable. We stored empty barrels, cases, and our collapsible sukkah there. The latter was an invention of a carpenter friend. Had my son lived before me, his natural mechanical instinct would probably have been influenced by this genius in construction and made of him a Henry Ford or Kaiser in mass production of ready-made portable houses.

With all this equipment one will understand why my father so readily branched out into other businesses, not prompted by avarice or even ambition for great wealth, but rather

a desire of not wasting the ready facilities. The fact is that each additional venture brought more work, worry, and responsibility, and less net revenue.

For a short time father was agent for an Alsace-Lorraine fire insurance company. I believe his selection for this post was to reward him for his consent to the use of the side-wall ofour house for an advertising poster.

Very few properties in Ingwiller were good insurance risks, due to the nature of their construction, the water supply and antiquated fire apparatus.

At the death of one of mother's uncles, father took over as working territory two nearby farming villages in which the deceased had had a monopoly as broker in the sale of their crops and livestock as well as the purchases of their farm requirements. In lieu of a fixed price for this "stock exchange seat" there were guaranteed royalties paid to uncle's family, and I often wondered whether anything remained for father. Except in winter, this was a pre-sunrise business, because the farmers were out in their fields most of the day.

These several enterprises should have been sufficient to satisfy even my father, to whom only a life of hard work seemed worthwhile. But there were the travelling salesmen, our friends; and why not use a part of our spacious house as a Hotel-Cafe-Restaurant? The trouble was that they were guests rather than customers, and any hard luck story about the

tribulations of the poor travelling man sufficed to make our charges nominal. The family liked overnight guests and the stories they told. We youngsters only disliked those that either ate all the dessert served them, or put the unconsumed part in their pockets.

Hotel Uhry had its "Dreyfus affaire" long before France disgraced herself before the world with its own act of infamy.

Out of nowhere, an American gentleman, born in Alsace, dropped in one winter afternoon. In his fur-lined coat, silk stovepipe, and an ivory handled, gold trimmed cane, he "cut quite a dash" in town. He had a plausible story for his trip to our isolated town, off the railroad, of no special attraction to the tourist.

He said he was a rich widower from America and was looking for a spot where he could forget the loss of his wife, and perhaps find a congenial, poor, lonely woman who would again bring sunshine to him. His birthplace was one of the most obscure hamlets in Alsace.

He was assigned to a suite ofour salon and best Chambre a coucher and all the available squab, ducks and geese in town were being reserved. He was readily accepted in the best social circle, was shown honors at the synagogue services, and created a sensation with the size of his Schnoder (charity contribution announced at the Torah) on the Sabbath.

There was a family consultation about the time and the amount of the bill to be presented. Postponement was the decision.

One afternoon, when Dreyfus was with some of his newly found cronies at the Cafe Munsch, two other strangers arrived from Quatzenheim, a small town in Alsace, looking for our guest. They drew a slightly different picture of him. In their town, too, he was trying to find peace and share his life with some good woman. He shared much with one and she was now an expectant mother. These men drove into town by horse and wagon and had passed the Cafe Munsch. When they went after him, he had disappeared and never a trace of him was found.

He left one suit, some shirts, and the stovepipe, the cane and some trinkets behind him; also an unpaid hotel bill. These would become the property of his creditors if unclaimed after a given time. Prospective buyers made inquiries about the fur coat, and there was one, wearing a size eight hat, who had his eyes on the stovepipe.

The Schammes and the Chazan filed claims, the former for the uncollected liberal Schnoder, the latter for an expected gratuity for the Mi Sheberach, the blessings made at the absentee's request when he was called to the Torah. Requisition not having been made in the prescribed time, the property was legally acquired by my family, the claims of the Schammes and

the Chazan having been ordered by the President of the congregation to be waived.

The citizen with the big head made a first offer for the oversize hat, namely ten cents. My father indignantly declined it, stating that the hat was worth five times that for use in hatching chickens. Customer: "Fifteen cents. Positively that is the last offer." Father: "So long should you live."

Purim came. I masqueraded in a frock coat and behind the family's back, wore the high hat. Some of my pals tried their aim at it with broomsticks, and off it went. I managed to smuggle the mangled chapeau back to its box. All was well until at Rosh-Hashonah, when the offer was raised to twenty cents. I was happy when father said no. But mother's later yes revealed the sad fact. I was accused, tried, found guilty and punished.

The cane was sent to my brother in New York. The suit was refitted for my brother Lucien. The evil spirit hovering over it operated at a time Lucien spent a vacation with an aunt living out of town, and the threadbare trousers melted away from under him. Lucien hadto stay in bed while a tailor made the replacement.

Typical customers in our Restaurant were Moshele and Itzickle from Oberbronn, cattle dealers, who came to our town usually on Fridays. They brought some meat and cheese from

home. In our Restaurant they spent five cents for a litre of beer. We supplied gratis the bread, plates, knives, and forks. They were honest men and unlike others, didn't take the knives and forks. With five breweries in town, this was another very competitive business, the last one my father entered, the first one he gave up.





The Uhry home 1876–1914

Main Street, Ingwiller
Uhry home 2d from right

CHAPTER IV: THE TOWN

Ingwiller was classified a city and reported a population of 2,256 in the census of December 31, 1890. I can give this figure with authority, having been assistant in the census, first to one teacher, and then to another, each taking count of the families of his own religious denomination. The "over twenty-one" evasion was not acceptable under the law, and part of the female species of that time was as reluctant about the admission of age as is her sister today. The ratio of population was about eleven to seven to four, Protestant, Catholic, Jewish respectively.

It was a fortified town in earlier days, and the moats surrounding it are still visible. The hinges, formerly holding the gates at the entrance of the town, were still solidly fastened to the original stone pillars that held them. The necessity to live inside of the gates and walls as a protection from the visits of robber-knights of old, accounts for the crowding of buildings inside the fortified zone.

The residential buildings were mostly two-story, gabled roof constructions, facing the street, with barns and stables in the rear. The town was long and narrow, traversed by a main street into which ran many short side-streets,

pocket lanes (dead end lanes) and courts. The market place between the Protestant church and the Town Hall was the center of the town. Besides serving the purpose its name indicates, it was the circus lot, playground, and miniature "Hyde Park," where weighty community problems were discussed by those who required no alcoholic coaxer to express their views. These preferred fresh air discussion to that of the Pubs, mixed with beer and Schnaps.

Very little residential building had been done after the end of the war of 1870 up to my departure in 1891. The expected recurrence of war probably was a deterring factor in the consideration of such enterprises.

The water supply came from public Artesian wells of which there were about ten. Water had to be pumped and carried home in containers.

The wells of Ingwiller, as in the Bible story of Rebecca, who gave drink to the servant of Abraham and was chosen by him for the wife of his master's son Isaac, were places of rendezvous and romance for the Romeos and Juliets of our town.

Livestock was watered either by troughs at the pumps or was driven to the river, the Moder, a direct tributary of the Rhine. Two small brooks flowed into it at Ingwiller. By clever engineering three flour mills and three saw mills were powered by this river. There were specially designed

public docks built into it, serving as places to do the family washing.

Streets and houses were lighted by petroleum and oil lamps or candles. Electricity was brought there only about 1900.

A short railroad route from Bouxwiller was completed in 1888, bringing us a little closer to the outside world.

CHAPTER V: GOVERNMENT

Politics were never exciting. One Reichstag delegate, a mayor, an Adjunct (vice-mayor) and nine citizens to the city Council were the only elective posts in the government. The Mayor was usually a Protestant, the Adjunct a Catholic, and the councilmen were from the several religious groups. The Mayor appointed a town clerk, a jailor, a watchman-townerier, field guards, a meat inspector, and a collector of octroi. The latter position had to be acquired by the bid of a lump sum which gave the successful bidder the right to collect the octroi tax for his own account. Octroi was imposed on everyone from the outside bringing in merchandise for retail sale or selling service. Market day was the big commercial harvest, but everyday brought peddlers and hucksters, broom makers, basket weavers, and other migrant tradesmen.

The watchman-townerier job was a double one. Official proclamations as well as private announcements were made by him. He summoned the people by beating a drum at designated spots, and when an audience had gathered on the street, at windows and on doorsteps, he would read his message. The more important announcements had to be posted up on a bulletin board at the Town Hall. Contemplated marriage had to be

advertised in this latter way, within a prescribed time, before the date set for the civil marriage.

This official was also at the head of the night-watch. Each burgher in his turn had to do night guard duty, either in person or by hiring a professional substitute. For these professionals who during the day spent most of their time and fees in the arms of Bacchus, the watchman's bench was as good a place as any to "sleep it off." They consorted with the gods from Bacchus to Morpheus. After the ringing of the curfew bell at ten o'clock, there were hourly patrols through the town. The chief, accompanied by one man carrying a lantern, at given intervals, would call out: "Dear people, be you told that now the clock has struck ..." (this, not in the melody of his Meistersinger colleague.) Sometimes the wind would blow out the lantern, but the guard was as a rule sufficiently "lit up" to show the way. The ringing of the church bells at sunrise was the end of their day's work.

Another function in which every citizen had to participate was that of Frohnen. This was a labor draft in which each able-bodied man had to give two or three days annually to public service such as breaking stones for road building or raking and disposing of fallen leaves. As in the case of watch duty, a substitute worker could be hired.

The field guards (Bann-Gards) worked only from May

to October protecting the countryside against pilfering, especially when fruits were ripening. Offenders landed in the "cooler" unless a fine imposed by the Mayor, in lieu of a jail term, was promptly paid. I became implicated in a wholesale catch by the Bann-Gard one Saturday afternoon. Much to their displeasure, my two older brothers were commanded to take their two younger ones along for a walk to the woods. Nearly every boy in town between seven and fourteen went along on that day. Fruit was not yet ripe, but that didn't matter. Some was being shaken down by the boys when the guard loomed in sight from nowhere and caught two or three. They were given the third degree so that more than twenty boys received the choice of either paying sixteen Pfenning (four cents) each, or sittingout a sentence. This had to be paid before ten o'clock Sunday morning. My family, with four culprits, formed the nucleus of a collection committee, making the rounds at an early hour on Sunday. We were not well received in most of the homes, but carried on with great resolve. Some, who at first approach, received us with a broomstick, after cool deliberation, saw matters in the proper light, and fell in line. As each offender was paid for, he and the other youngsters of the family and the neighborhood, would join the growing army of collectors. With no time to spare, but with much bravado, we walked to the Town Hall to enrich the treasury by paying the fine of

four marks ($1.00) in assorted coins.

The state government had the power of appointment to all other positions. We had seven elementary sectarian schools, and one non-sectarian Kindergarten.

There was a Protestant minister, a vicar, a priest, and a non-resident rabbi. The Christian ministers gave religious instruction in their special denominational schools. The Jewish teacher included it in his regular curriculum.

Two gendarmes were the guardians of the state laws. A postmaster, letter-carriers, a receiver of taxes, a notary, a comptroller of the manufacture of alcoholic drinks, an engineer of roads with road laborers, a forester with a considerable staff, a station master with a crew of switchmen and trainmen, altogether formed a considerable bureaucratic group. In addition to the permanently stationed men, there were visiting controllers and inspectors that came from the capital cities of the county and state. The most unpopular among these was the one checking weights and measures. He made surprise visits and quite often caught chiselers to whom he meted out just desserts. Another travelling inspector was the license assessor.

The majority of the state officials in the 70's and 80's were North Germans. In the attempt to force Prussianism down the throats of the Alsatian people who, while speaking a 90% German jargon, had a fiercely French soul, the

Bismarkian diplomacy worked that way. There was better feeling toward the officials from South Germany.

The Fire Department was made up of volunteers. It had its own band, and a fire drill in the early morning hours was a social event with an audience clad not in evening dress, but formal night gowns.

I was never sure who subsidized the jobs of the shepherd, the swineherd, and the goose girl, all of them monopolies of respective dynasties. Our shepherd, a kindly figure, as pictured throughout the histories of all lands, in special garb, his staff in hand, gathered his flock each morning, giving a signal in a two-tone whistle produced by his second and fourth fingers and his mouth. His almost-human dogs assisted him in a manner not unlike that of the Kindergarten helper. I always marvelled at the way the flock with the instinct of the sheep and the intelligence of the dogs, was brought back at the end of the day, each member to its own home stall.

In the summer and early fall, weather permitting, the flock would stay in pasture for days at a time. At sunset it was herded into the fold and the shepherd took his forty winks in a mobile field-hospital cart. Our shepherd was an attractive man. As events proved, his hypnotic influence overpowered not only the quadrupedal but also the bipedal innocent lambs. As a polygamist he outranked even

the best ram in his flock. He was indeed the "wolf in sheep's clothing." Many a repentant maiden confusedly recited: "The shepherd is my lord, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."

The swineherd and the goose girl, because of their lowly occupations and the undeserved contempt of a snobbish society, were in many literatures used as symbols of nobility in disguise. Who has forgotten the childhood thrills brought by the fairy tales, elevating in their climax these social stepchildren to the golden royal thrones. The swineherd of my memory, like the herald at Court, summoned his charges, blowing a curved horn. He led his herd, not as the shepherd does his flock beside the still waters, but rather to the swill and mire to allow them to wallow to their hearts' content. Their grunts and squeaks were not pleasant sounds, nor their appearance a fascinating sight. Many of us who were prejudiced then, but have since cultivated a taste for ham and bacon, then a forbidden food to us, have become reconciled to the right of being of this species of domestic animals. With the limited facility for garbage disposal they might have been a blessing in disguise. I'm sure the Creator in His wisdom made them for a good purpose and will condone the prejudice of those whose dislike is based on a religious prohibition. The swineherd's, as the shepherd's, was a seasonal occupation.

Our goose girl, - I call her ours, for in off season,

she was often employed in our household to do some of the chores. Her daughter was our maid for several years. Unlike her feathered charges -- noisy, giddy, stupid geese -- she was quite serious, patient, and had innate common sense. It takes patience and great endurance to do this job well. Her superior sense and good judgement were sometimes of little avail for she could neither swim nor fly. The natural playgrounds of her school were the ponds and brooks not too deep to step in and shoo back the stubborn and wayward of the flock. A long staff and a potato sack comprised her equipment. The sack hung across her body from the shoulder and contained first-aid implements like bandages, splints, lotions, and a salve to be used when an occasional accident would happen in the ranks. The sack was also used as an ambulance for the wounded and the sick.

Some of the government appointees were college and university graduates, others gained their places doing extra service in the army. A gendarme had to rank a sergeant. Servicemen of lower rank were eligible to become letter carriers, railroad workers, bridge tenders, and to fill similar positions. In our town, quite a few of these were heavy drinkers. A reason for this was probably the monotony of their work as well as the rigor of the dictates from the powers above, allowing them no leeway or judgement in any case.

My own unpleasant experience with one of the

gendarmes well illustrates how destructive of good will the above-named shortcomings were. I was twelve years of age and owned a fishing rod (no fish of over a half pound was ever taken out of our brook.) One of the laws demanded that the fisherman must have a written permission from the owner of the land where he fished. The gendarme appeared on the bank opposite to my position andasked me to show my permit for his long-distance inspection. He waited around and then asked my first name. The next afternoon my father was served with a Straf-Urkunde (procès-verbal, which is a notice of a fine without a hearing of the case) issued by the court of Bouxwiller, in the amount of three marks. The gendarme's contention was that several times my line floated more than half way across the approximately fifteen feet wide stream. Three marks or three days in jail, if not paid within twenty-four hours after service of papers. This had never been heard of before in our town and brought great indignation from many quarters. It was most expedient, though, to pay up and shut up.

CHAPTER VI: THE PEOPLE AND THEIR OCCUPATIONS

The population was chiefly of native stock with a small infiltration of Alsatians from the neighboring villages and the above-mentioned German government officials. The majority did farming and cattle raising. The town being the hub in a circle of ten to fifteen villages within a radius of five miles, offered better than average opportunities for retail business and artisan trades.

The largest industry was beer brewing. There were five breweries with enough output to quench any fire, in the event that the water supply would be frozen or exhausted.

There was a match factory which was a mysterious affair, made so probably by its necessary isolation. The "keep off" signs in a community where there was not much regard for the rule on trespassing, were very unpopular. After my days, this factory became a silk-throwing plant.

There were cotton bleacheries over a long stretch of meadows beside the brook.

Three saw mills, three flour mills, two tanneries, and two kilns, gave steady employment to many. Wood being almost exclusively the fuel for heating as well as the building material, offered the opportunity for the large lumber business built up by one family.

There were two private banks. The surviving one grew rapidly and had several branches, and after merging with another bank, established headquarters at Strasbourg. I wonder whether my tutoring in mathematics of one of the third generation of this family of bankers, who became the head of this institution, had anything to do with its great success.

There were two blacksmiths, robust and brawny men. The rhythmic strokes of the sledgehammer on the anvils, the flying sparks, the bellows fanning the fires, were fascinating sights and sounds to me. Verdi, Wagner, Longfellow and other composers, poets, and painters, must have been similarly impressed with this rhythmic merger of fire, metal, sound, and human labor.

The nailsmith, manufacturing his articles by hand and hammer, was the personification of patience. His effort produced a drop of sweat for every nail he beat into shape from the red hot tip of the iron rod. His outlet was with the horseshoers, carpenters, shoemakers, and the variety of his output was extensive.

In the 1880's very little machinery had been invented and most things were hand made. The manufacture of shoes and wearing apparel gave employment to many. There were masters, graduate helpers, and apprentices. In most trades, the term of apprenticeship was three years. The employee

received board and lodging in the master's house and pay that cannot be called starvation wages in view of the above-mentioned part of the remuneration. This wage, per month, amounted to about what is paid a charwoman for a morning's work today. In most cases the families of apprentices had to pay a fee and sign contracts. The general work schedule was from six A.M. to eight P.M. with as much time out for meals as the boss required to devour his own. He sat at table with the workers and set the tempo to the gulping-symphony. When the working hours were reduced from about eighty to seventy-two hours weekly, there were predictions of children going naked and old folks freezing to death from the lack of supply of clothing.

In my spare time, I would visit the various workshops to watch and listen. Conversation there ran from gossip to fiction, from stale humor to homey philosophy. We had, in my time, several fine raconteurs. I single out a cobbler. He lived alone in a one-room and alcove, remodelled sheep stable. There he worked, slept, ate and drank. He was at his best after he had imbibed his first litre of potato schnaps. Having served in the French army for seven years, he had seen much, and a fifty percent allowance for exaggeration still left a goodly amount of adventure for us to feed on.

There was a one-man dye shop. In the same plant, cotton and linen homespun were gewalkt. Walken is a sort of shrinking and fastening process for textiles. There was

much dull season in this line and unlike the cobbler, he did not have the will and tact to make friends. He too was a living example of the truth of the proverb: "Idleness is the beginning of all vice." (Mussiggang ist aller Laster Anfang) This man was honest and harmless, but also addicted to alcohol. I can write of this with authority because my father was a licensed distributor and these men were customers. We needed no alarm clock in our house. Their thirst brought them out early in the morning for a rap at our shutters.

The dyer's hardworking wife owned an acre of land on which she had planted potatoes. Some of the work connected with such a crop has to be done in the warm season. She asked her "tired" husband to lend a hand. After an hour's work, his throat was parched; he returned to town and it took forty glasses of beer to quench his thirst. A day laborer's pay was thirty cents, and beer was two cents a glass. Bad investment, madame!

Like Hans Sachs, there were many bench-workers that were poets and philosophers. Such a man was Karl Clemmer, a saddler. His ground floor shop had a window to the main street and there was never a vacant space at this window. I cannot help thinking of him every time I pass the Times Building and see crowds reading the bulletins that are posted. He could do his work and still watch the unfolding of the

town's doings. His circulating audience supplied the gaps in the event that anything had escaped him. Among my keepsakes, I have a leather wallet which he gave me to safeguard the eighty marks which was the expense money for my trip to America. I wore it around my neck between my undershirt and the bare chest, and sixty marks landed with me safely on these rich shores. Karl was intelligent and highly respected. He was elected to the town Council and was the official coroner and meat inspector. He had an original sense of humor. When a new synagogue was being built, he told a visiting American, native of the town, that in the court of the Shul the Jewish people would erect a monument. That sounded very Catholic. The visitor inquired: "To whom?" He answered: "Christopher Columbus. Hasn't every Jewish family inthis town a good investment in America, having sent so many of its sons?"

Another philosopher-idealist was our neighbor, Eugene Letz, a tinsmith-plumber-electrician and general storekeeper. His workshop with two or three helpers was a strong attraction to the youth of the town. The breweries supplied him with most of his work. He was an inventive genius and I recall the time he installed the town's first private bath in our neighbor's house.

There was a community bath with water supply from the brook. It had two tubs, and advance reservations were

never necessary. The Jewish community, however, operated a ritual bath (Mikveh) for ladies only, where advance notice for time had to be given. The sons of Florette, the lady of the bath, and a few favorite pals of theirs, including me, were the only males who ever crossed the threshold of this sanctum. And not to be misunderstood, this was for the purpose of pumping water into a pool. On the side, we kept track of the due date of each customer.

In these institutions there was evidence all over of the genius of Letz. When electricity was brought in, years after my departure, he was in his glory. In 1899 when I visited my home, I ordered the installation of electric bells in my parental house. The planning of power and light for my 10,000 square feet business loft some years after was a trivial matter compared with the thought of the execution of this order. One of the great conveniences to be gotten from this bell system was the arousing each morning of our house-maid, without compelling my parents to go through cold rooms and corridors and up a flight of stairs, and often repeat this performance when the maid had turned over for another wink. Letz was good-hearted and public-spirited, giving much of his time and thought to public improvements. He was very emotional, and I have seen this giant of a man shed tears listening to his oldest son's violin performances. Eugene, Jr. became instructor of music in one of France's best known

conservatories.

Another picturesque figure in the town was Mr. Bollinger. He came with his family from the Palatinate, was a wine merchant, and manufactured vinegar. Evil minds called him a vinegar and wine manufacturer. He apparently brought capital with him, for he bought several houses in the best part of town. In every way he towered far above the average burgher, but they looked down on him as an intruder (Hergelaufener) on their holy ground. I never could see why of all places, he chose Ingwiller. Only little and very poor wine was grown in the vicinity. He, more than anyone else, fanned the low burning interest of the government in the building of a railroad. Until 1838 a stagecoach carried mail and men to the nearest railroad at Bouxwiller. Not only was he snubbed by the authorities who did not invite him to the banquet marking the opening of the road, but a movement was set afoot to change the location of post office and telegraph station from his property to a spot closer to the depot, he thus losing his tenants. Such was the reward for his efforts from an ill-willed, jealous group of town leaders.

In the philosophers' hall of fame, I must place Mr. Moise Blum, butcher (Katzev Moshe). This man had the double capacity of bearing great sorrow with dignity and rising to the height of homey and subtle humor spontaneously.

He was much loved, and we felt deeply with him and his family in the tragic death of his fine twenty-six-year-old son. I often speak of his reply to the question asked by my mother: "How is Dinah, the wife?"

"She is at home cooking. She's cooking over forty years now and is not soft yet."

After Alsace became German in 1871, the Pfenning-coins came into circulation. The population was used to the substantial French sous and two-sous, equivalent to one and two cents, respectively, and very reluctantly took to the Pfenning (one quarter of a cent) and two-Pfenning coppers. A customer one day laid out an endless string of these as payment for some meat. Mr. Blum handed the package of meat to her, swept the coins in his apron and dumped the Tinnev (dirt) on the garbage heap. The Prussian gendarme heard of it and arrested him for insulting the Crown. Public opinion prevailed on the officer's better judgement, and Mr. Blum was let off. As I think of his many bons-mots, I like to call him the Mark Twain of Ingwiller. His son, Henri, became cashier ofour bank and a leader in the community.

I have elsewhere spoken of the great competition in the retail business. It was so easy to start a business with a little stock in the surplus space of many houses. While all stores carried a great many articles, I must make special mention of one store who passed up nothing that was brought

to the town by the many travelling men. This was the owner of Maison Schlotterbeck. Two incidents in connection with his store have left indelible impressions on me. Cream-filled chocolate bars might have existed in the dreams of imaginative children, but were never seen in our town until Stollwerk, the Hershey of that day, brought them to realization. The fillings were in pink and white, and I was green with envy of the boy next door who had been able to get the ten Pfenning it took to buy this luxury. I managed to raise two Pfenning, selling some pen points that I had won in a game of chance. The bars were divided into five squares. By persistent argument I soon convinced Madame Schlotterbeck that it would be better to sell in the smaller units than allow the goods to become stale. This method, however, was abandoned after the first sale because the cream escaped from the open chocolate shell.

The store was in a separate building adjoining the main house, where the Schlotterbeck family operated a cafe-restaurant-hotel. A bell was rung to call one of the family when the store was unattended. My pals and I would ring this bell and run. One day when I was "it" the owner appeared before I could get away. I quickly posed as a customer. I had to think fast to ask for something that would not be in stock. I asked for a black silk string to be attached to my mother's eyeglasses. That was one item missing in the great

variety. Mother didn't wear eyeglasses and Mrs. Schlotterbeck knew it. She reported the incident, in good humor, and at her request I received a temporarily suspended sentence, subject to my father's review of the case and a reversal of verdict.

An unusual combination of commerce and profession was the business of Vogt-Merkling. They did photography, toothpulling, schroepfen (cupping), treatment by leeches, haircutting, shaving, and they were the keepers of the public bath. A sample of their photography has been conserved in the group picture of my sister, my brother, and myself, at the ages of three, twelve, and ten, respectively. The Vogts were a fine family and were well liked despite their several pain inflicting occupations.

Being located away from a railroad, the town supported several expressmen whose covered wagons plied between it and cities like Strasbourg, Saverne, Haguenau, Wingen, Bitche, Saarguemines, and way stations. At this very time, spring of 1945, these places are the scenes of the bitterest fighting between the Allies and the Nazi hordes.

There was one business that one would enter, hat in hand, and that was our Pharmacy. The orderly arrangement of the stock, the many Latin labelled bottles and drawers with their mysterious contents, the incense-laden air, gave the place an atmosphere of dignity, even holiness.

The coming of the soda fountain must have lurked somewhere in my consciousness as the following incident might indicate. The sight and sensation of the effervescent Seidlitz Powder (Brause Pulver) was one that induced me at times to fake a headache. I had the original idea to mix this drink with one of the flavoring syrups that were added to bad tasting medicines. A cooperating clerk, in his chief's absence, concocted this "drink of the gods" for me after I had eaten some pre-ripe plums. This nearly sent me to the angels.

The proprietor, in his tasseled silk skull-cap, looked the part of the mystic brewer of miracle brews. Licenses for Pharmacies were limited, based on district population, and ceiling prices were set by the Government. There was a close checkup on this as well as on the stock maintenance, and drugs that were ineffective due to age, were condemned. These mutually protective conditions, however, helped to make this a profitable, staple business that usually remained in a family from generation to generation.

We were fortunate to have a good physician in Doctor Adolphe Kummer, who followed in his father's footsteps. We saw a great deal of him, as my maternal grandfather was a bed patient for many years, and our immediate family with five children of even better than average good health, had its routine of sickness and accidents. He travelled in the

typical country doctor's vehicle, and his practice covered a large territory. A stop in front of any housewould give public notice of illness there, and the rush of inquiries was immediate. Offered assistance from neighbors was sincere and spontaneous.

A combination hospital and old-age home, (Asyl Nouenberg) founded by the Protestant minister, was non-sectarian in the admittance of patients and received considerable support from Jewish patrons. A young German doctor started practice in the upper story of our house, but only stayed a few short years. Another one, native of a nearby town, fared better and stayed on permanently.

Two midwives were the obstetrical experts and seemed to do very well. One was Protestant, the other Catholic. Most of the Jewish cases went to the latter. The Catholic "stork" Lisette Monner, lived two doors away from us and her expeditions for pre-natal care, with the professional basket over her arm, were followed by us with great interest. In this way we had advance notice of coming events that in authenticity would equal Winchell's predictions.

When in a later chapter you will read about the festivities at a christening, you will discern the chief reason for my interest in births. I felt a close attachment to Lisette, and can still feel the excitement aroused by the

news that she might bring us a little sister. In her mysterious basket she carried a May and Edlich catalog -- the Sears-Roebuck facsimile of the 1880's -- and from it I selected the type of sister I would tolerate. I can also recall my great disappointment when on March 23, 1881, I was shown delivery of my order without the curls and frilly dress as pictured in the catalog. I felt that there was some "chiselling." After this experience, I was in later years always prepared to make allowances for exaggeration between the sample shown and the article delivered.

Supplementing the efficient system of medical care, there were two types of persons,- the miracle healers and those who could cure all out of a medical book. One, Caroline Diffine, a seamstress, had such a book, as well as a mental treasure of remedies, and her gratis advice and palatable prescriptions were accepted by many. Her procedure of diagnosis was to collect such information as she could get from the patient, the family, and gossiping neighbors. Then out would come the book. Since she accepted no fee, and gave only verbal advice, she was probably within the law, and the doctor apparently got enough fun out of it to shut his eyes. The world, even in this more enlightened age, is still full of this sort of quacks. In our family, Caroline's mending ability was strictly confined to my mother's dresses. But she had her day. When I was ready to leave for America,

the fearful matter of "mal de mer" loomed large. She had the sure preventative. Her mother's brother, thirty years before, had crossed the ocean and sent home the following remedy: Soak tissue paper in cherry brandy (Kirsch). At first symptoms, apply externally on bare stomach.

I was a passenger on the SS La Bourgogne, leaving Le Havre at nine A.M. January 10, 1891. I felt distressing symptoms at nine-thirty A.M., went below to the cabin shared with three others, and dunked the tissue. I collapsed during the application, and when one of my fellow passengers found me in that state, surrounded by the circumstantial evidence of a bottle and the pungent liquor smell that penetrated even the air of a second-class cabin, I was branded a juvenile "souse." Luckily my Alsatian steward was able to vindicate me, he having witnessed the performance.

A big business that only maintained an office in our town was that of Mr. Raphael Liewer, who controlled and distributed the output of several glass factories at Goetzenbruck and Mintzthal. His sons, Hippolite and Armand, later came to the United States and operated a large bottle manufacturing plant at Coshocton, Ohio, selling its product to brewers and manufacturers of soft drinks. After some years, they sold their business and returned to France with a large fortune. Hippolite died not long after that, and Armand, prior to his death, had lost all in unfortunate

Stock Exchange speculation. Armand on his frequent trips to New York, spent a great deal of time with me, and on every occasion mentioned the contribution I made to his success, teaching him mathematics in his Gymnasium days. On one occasion, when Armand had made a high mark in a class test, his father sent me a card complimenting me on the result. I still have the card with my keepsakes. This praise went to my head, and I felt that my sixty Pfenning (15 cents) fee per hour was inadequate. I took courage and gave notice of a five cent advance, effective at the end of the regular twenty-hour term. This was cheerfully accepted by Mr. Liewer but not the families of my other pupils. One of them tried to chastise me for such an indiscretion, Chutzpah (brazen nerve) by cancelling my services. It happened that their boy and Armand were classmates at the Gymnasium, and when at the end of the term, his mark had slumped to a failing one, I was asked to reinstate lessons. This is where the spirit of my paternal grandmother arose and stubbornly I refused. Odd as this may seem, I came to a terrific clash over this matter with my father, in whom grandmother's same spirit worked, only in reverse. He won. I sacrificed my principle, but gained 33-1/3 percent in pay,and as I have stated before, slight satisfaction in the future success of this banker in the making.

To remove all charges of a profiteering tendency on

my part, I want to state that full-fledged teachers received five times my fee. My chief motive in mentioning these incidents, in a way bordering on self praise, is not a boastful one, but rather a way of showing how closely interwoven the life of a boy of fifteen can become with that of a small community. I want the reader to remember this for I will frequently relapse to personal reference in the unfolding of some of my experiences.

The collection of rags, bones, junk, metals and animal pelts was a worthwhile business for several families.

While a great many houses had their own bake ovens, there were three bakeries. The largest part of their production was bread. Only one of them expanded into fancy boulangerie (bakery), such as madelaine de Nancy, croquon, macaroons.

A commercial sculptor was Mr. Edouard Fischbach. He had a monopoly on the making of tombstones for all the religious denominations. I was greatly fascinated by his transformation of a block of granite or a slab of marble into the finished stone, with German, French, Latin or Hebrew inscriptions. He was socially one of the most neutral personalities, intelligent, kind and close to the people, due to his sharing with them a common interest in something that bordered on holiness.

A small industry not to be forgotten was the

manufacture of linseed oil. The process of crushing the seed and pressing the pulp was similar to that in the cider mill.

The making of cider in the fruit harvesting months had to be jammed into a short space of time. The mill was rented by the growers of the fruit. There was no money charged for this, but the dehydrated mash was left for the mill owner who distilled brandy from it and sold the refuse as fertilizer. A little extra business was also derived by him from the sale or repair of barrels since he was the cooper, a thriving trade in our town of breweries.

As everywhere, there were the town fools, clowns, halfwits and lazybones. I'm glad now to feel that I never had the will to amuse myself at the expense of their shortcomings. Some of them were not as foolish as their mockers would have them be, and the reason for their status was not always one of mental abnormality, but often a physical one, or unusual manner of speech or motion, or even an unfortunate deformity. An honest fool is preferable to a shrewd, cunning crook. Even a fool seems to have a place in the scheme of life. I am thinking of that oft-quoted universal proverb: "Children and fools tell the truth."

I cannot refrain from relating thestory of one of the town's harmless Schlemiels; Schiele's Fromel was full grown but mentally backward, did nothing in a remunerative way,

followed organ-grinders, guided tourists, and busied himself with other trivial pursuits in his own sleepy way. His mother, her patience exhausted, asked him one day to hitch up the horse and wagon and take two bolts of cloth to the town of Weinburg, one and a half miles off. Before the team was out of town, Fromel was fast asleep. The horse pulled along to a point where the road turned left to his assigned destination, while the right fork in the road led back home. The horse decided to take the short cut back and soon was along the main street of the home town. As they passed the church, the clock struck the hour, half arousing the slumbering traveller. He saw the church and said: "Just a church like our church!" and dozed off again. He awoke at the town hall and said: "Just a town hall like our town hall!" and again fell asleep. A moment later the horse halted before Fromel's house. His mother was on the steps. Fromel, blinking a bit, said: "Just a house like our house, and just a mother like my mother!" His mother shouted: "Just a Schlemiel-fool like our fool."

Among the several grotesque and quixotic personalities I recall one, Meyer Louis, who was always jolly. He was a jack-of-all-trades, such as the spinning of hemp rope, hair cutting, sheep shearing, wood chopping, and playing of the clarinet in the town band. My father, in lieu of the payment of a debt due him, contracted hair cuts for the five male

members of his household. I have never recovered from this massacre, and my hair has not behaved since. I believe under the stimulation of the "medicine" he sipped from a hip-pocket flask, he became confused between wood chopping and hair cutting. His man Friday was one Bauer, who held the strands that Louis spun into rope. He also held him down when he was fighting drunk, and up when he was down. There we had the forerunner of the Holding Company of our day!

Another picturesque figure was the Sauerkraut-Schneider. His was short, seasonal occupation. He and his wife together schneidered (tailored, cut clothing to fit) wearing apparel the rest of the year. Sauerkraut cutting was custom work, done on the premises, at so much per head of cabbage.

Wood cutting and chopping gave employment to several professionals. The wood was bought in logs, and labor was paid for on a piece work basis, arranged according to the grade and condition of the lumber. Every little knot had a meaning of its own and was a consideration in the calculation of the service charge. The joy of watching this process was more or less dampened by the fact that the kindled wood had to be carried up one or more flights and had to be stacked up under the roof.

I have already spoken of Thursday, market day, when

the truck and dairy farmers of the district would bring in their products such as greens, eggs, butter, cheese, fruits, etc. This was a market day for foodstuffs only. Most of the money taken in was in turn spent in town for such things as dried groceries, textiles and hardware. Each seller had to pay the otroi tax, according to the amount of space used and its location. Trading was not permitted until the town hall bell rang the opening of the session. As on our Stock Exchange, it was a matter of bid and ask, the present system differing only by the elimination of "compliments and good wishes," exchanged by the respective parties in the event of disagreement as to price.

Three times yearly there was a Jahrmart, a kind of county fair that I will refer to in a later chapter, dealing with festivities.

CHAPTER VII: CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, RECREATION and FESTIVITIES

The functions named in the title of this chapter were largely tied up with the religious life of the community. Occasionally a family theatrical troupe, the Loders, would stop off on its tours. This company of players came only on a C.B.D. (cash before delivery) arrangement and at an admission charge of fifty Pfenning (twelve and a half cents) Only the reckless spendthrifts would subscribe. No performance anywhere has given me the thrills as did the presentations of PRECIOSA, or LENORE, DIE BRAUT AM GRABE, LES RENTZAU, by Erckmann-Chatriand, and others in the players' repertoire, including even operettas and operas such as DER ARME JONATHAN, TROMPETER VON SAECKINGEN, LA FILLE DU REGIMENT.

The visiting circus, while it drew much larger crowds than the theatre, had a more uncertain "gate." The open marketplace, with its large acacia trees, was the arena. Admittance was free. All were welcome. There came a time, however, before the much-heralded balloon ascension, when a collection was taken up. The fact that contributions were voluntary was emphasized. To prevent a mass exodus, a request was made to "stay put even if you had nothing to drop into the hat." This, nevertheless, was the signal for

the young males to take to the acacias, and the older ones to find other means of escape. In view of the disappointing collection, the ascension was always postponed to the tomorrow that never came.

Various attempts were made to bring the musical home-talent together in an orchestra, and for several seasons we had concerts. A limited subscribers' list underwrote the financial maintenance and filled the auditorium, while the fleeing audience of the circus preferred inhaling its music in the free and wide open.

A male chorus was more permanent. Schools and churches were fine agencies for voice culture. There were less than twenty-five pianos and organs in the town. Like the radio and graphophone ofour day, so did the migrant organ grinder develop the musical taste of the country folks of that era. The works of Verdi, Rossini, Gounod, Offenbach, and even Wagner would rouse our souls, until a trained monkey appealingly held out his hat, giving silent notice that it was time to drop a coin in the cup. Before I was ten, I could sing the leading soprano and tenor solos of many operas, accompanied by my older brother taking the alto and baritone parts.

When the Prussian Governor of Alsace-Lorraine, Stadthalter von Manteufel, visited our town, about three hundred children from all the schools were to sing for him. My brother and I were chosen to sing the solo parts. At the

sight of the visitor, his ears sticking out from the pressure of an ill-fitting military cap, I became hysterical, ruined the painfully rehearsed performance, and reaped the disgrace that befalls such a despoiler. Under proper guidance I might have become a Caruso or De Reszke or, well -- a cantor, anyhow. Another refiner of musical taste was the automatic player, a sort of forerunner of the present day juke box, with a superior selection of dance music. This was brought in by the enterprising owner of the most select dance hall. A Groschen, a French copper coin worth two cents, set the rollers in motion. The youth gathered there on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, waiting for some reckless spendthrift or chivalrous cavalier to drop the coin in the slot. There were long intervals sometimes, and then there would be a "Blue Danube" on the house. Some of the Jewish boys had charge accounts since they could not touch money on the Sabbath.

The dance hall, with its adjacent beer garden, was the great center of attraction at the town's most anticipated festival, the annual Kermess. It was a three-day celebration, starting on a Sunday in August. It was like Easter or Whit Sunday, a time for family visiting and brought a great many people from far and wide. The town was dressed up in its best array, and the peasants in their specific costumes lent color and festive atmosphere to it all. The Alsatian bow,

the embroidered bodice, the high colored skirt with rows of peasant embroidery on the bottom, helped to set to fever heat the rustic cavaliers in their Eton-like black coats and red, gold-buttoned vests. This was open season for romance, bringing its variety of joys and sorrows, by-products of love running smooth or wild. Many were the matrimonial matches, but more numerous were the fist and knife duels between the jealous rivals. Each day there was dancing from afternoon to early morning, harmless pleasure in itself, if it had not been for the fatal "seeing home."

There were carousels, shooting galleries, apparatus to test strength, games of chance, and much of the alluring paraphernalia one still sees at amusement parks and county fairs. The Rappel die Katz, or numbers-wheel, prospered most, and the best equipped Woolworth store would blush for its inferior display as compared to the assortment of the prizes for the lucky winners.

The stands with Lebkuchen, candy sticks manufactured before our eyes, and the Knackwurst, were good to look at or smell, and that was free. The only time my Jewish pride wavered was when I smelled those pork sausages. In the eyes of some fellow-Jews, the sin of eating one of them would have ranked just this side of committing murder, but it did take self restraint to pass them up.

On the third day of this period, a Jahrmarkt was held.

This brought an additional crowd of buyers and sellers. Merchandise was exhibited in temporary booths that lined the main thorofare, and the center of activity was the market-place. Textiles, table linens, crockery, hardware, poultry, suckling pigs, and whatnot were brought in wagons and vans especially built for these travelling stores. A woman dealing in textile remnants, had acquired by virtue of repeated use, the right of displaying her wares on the sidewalk before our house. She was a master in salesmanship, as well as a designer and stylist. With her the customer was always right -- right size for even the shortest remnant. A very interesting and regular attendant was Jacob, a combination faker-psychologist-hypnotist merchant. He dealt in shawls, kerchiefs and kindred accessories, and used the auction system of selling. He capitalized on the low IQ of his followers. He flattered, shouted, threatened, predicted winters that could not be endured without his shawls, and apparently held the "suckers" that never would learn.

The cartoons in our tabloid papers had their replica in the Mordthaten that were shown for the purpose of the sale of a kind of dime novel. On maps hung on posts, there were illustrated gruesome tales. They would begin with the innocent maiden going to the woods to pick flowers. She was followed by the villain, seduced, deserted, disgraced, either murdering her fatherless child or the betrayer, or committing

suicide.

There was always a moral to these stories. In the one above, it would be: "Lovely maiden, don't pick flowers in the woods!" With rod in hand, pointing to the pictures, this moral uplifter would unfold his plot in song. This done, the sale would begin at ten Pfenning a copy.

CHAPTER VIII: SOCIAL LIFE

Social life was limited and very simple. In homes of large families usually containing the business or trade of the breadwinners, there was little time for the type of present day social intercourse. Yet folks did get together.

The Kumkelstube period was on the wane when I was born. These were winter evening gatherings to which women brought their spinning wheels, in the era when all linens were homespun, usually from home grown flax. The meetings took place in different homes. To the humming of the wheels there was song, gossip, culinary discussion, whetting the appetites for the goodies that were brought in by the participants in their turn. Some of the beaux would drop in where the girls were assembled, and the cake eaters managed to get in on the feast at the right moment.

Since evening gatherings always included feminine work such as knitting, embroidering, or mending, most of the men sought their recreation in the cafes or in stag sessions elsewhere. The great majority had very little of even this simple form of recreation. With them it was a case of early to bed and early to rise.

Subscribers to the "Strasbourger Neueste Nachrichten" were few, and still fewer were the readers of the two-language

paper "Journal d'Alsace." The day's work done, some of the neighbors would gather at our house eager to have my mother read the day's release of the running serials in these papers. This usually evoked lively discussion, prediction of further developments in the plot, gleeful satisfaction when one's prophecy was right and sad disappointment when the author's fictional dream took a different turn. As I recall the reactions, I wonder why it took so long for the Freudian theory to be conceived.

The only semi-public library in town was that of the Jewish elementary school, bought with private funds and intended for the pupils only. This was chiefly a collection of works on natural science, history and geography. Notwithstanding, our town gave to the world poets, writers, and several artists.

Such is the effect of simple pastoral life on those whose souls are attuned to the beauty of nature by living closely to it and possessing a feeling of kinship to the whole Universe.

CHAPTER IX: RELIGIOUS LIFE

I have stated before that the majority of the population was Protestant. Catholics and Jews together about equalled it. There were two families of Schismatiker; I do not know where and how they differed in their beliefs from the other Christian faiths, but they seemed to be ostracized by them.

In my early years, the two Christian denominations used the same church, a very impressive Gothic building, with a high steeple and two bells blending in harmonious and penetrating sound. These bells supplied great moments of thrill and adventure to me, as the reader will readily gather from the next lines. Jews rarely entered the church, not because of any direct prohibition by Jewish law, but rather by an instinctive aversion to the images and symbols recalling age-long torture and misery to their people, still branded as Christ-killers rather than bringers.

The tolling of the bells was the job of our genial neighbor, Georges Kuntz. He needed from one to three helpers in this work, and I had a preference in his call. Georges was another one of our good customers for Schnaps, not the ordinary Kartoffel Schnaps (potato brandy) but the aristocratic Zwetschenwasser (prune brandy) as befitted his lofty station in the community. He gave me preference in serving

him because I poured full measure to overflowing to be in his good graces. Georges always opened an emergency door at the church, admitting me to the belfry tower without having to go through the main auditorium. The bells, one a tenor, the other a basso, were set in motion by straps that ended on the ground floor. The thrills came with the stopping of them which was done by hanging on to the straps and by our body weight gradually reducing the momentum to a halt. This would give us the dizzy sensation of a flight to heaven and an abrupt rejection back to earth.

The manner of tolling indicated its particular purpose. Bells were rung at daybreak, at noon, at sunset, and again at ten P.M. To differentiate between Catholic and Protestant functions, the tolling started with the tenor bell and was joined by the basso bell for the Protestants, while the reverse arrangement applied to the Catholics. To announce death, the bells were rung three times in succession, and the manner indicated above gave notice of the religious denomination of the deceased. The length of the time of tolling depended on the importance of the family. In that way we knew whether a prince or a pauper had died.

In case of fire, the church bells were rung in slow tempo, mingled with the school bell, thus summoning the volunteer fire department from home or field.

There was sometimes recognition for this service in

the shape of drink or food offered by the families concerned. I didn't drink much Schnaps at age ten, and the food I did not even touch by hand, but Georges usually whispered to the host about my shyness and saw to it that the good stuff was not wasted. At christenings, we had a preference of receiving our candies from the godmother in our hands, while the rest of the town's children followed the cortege from church to home and had to scramble like football players for theirs.

A sad rule was the dictum of special tolling of the bells at the wedding of an unmarried mother, or a bride well on the way to the blissful state of motherhood. The cruel insistence on this compulsory public confession of sin borders on the persecution of Hester in the "Scarlet Letter."

With no intention to offend anyone to whom church bells are a symbol of a call to worship, I want to tell the story of a couple who came to a strange town to be married. The minister, suspicious that all was not kosher, explained that when the bride is not chaste, only the small bell is rung, otherwise both of them. The groom unhesitatingly stated that his fiancee was the personification of purity. Sternly addressing the bride on the subject, she answered haltingly: "Well - ah - yes!" The doubting minister stared at her and she nervously suggested: "Start with the small bell and now and then ring in the big one just a little bit."

Protestants had services on Sunday and holidays only. As long as I remember, Pastor Herrmann was the leader of the flock, assisted by a young vicar. He was tall, stern, and dignified and, I believe, somewhat aloof from the population. He lived with his family in one of the best houses, set in a garden surrounded by a solid iron picket fence. A thick stone wall separated his property from that of the synagogue, and I'm sure that nothing except ceremonial sounds ever penetrated or surmounted it. There may have been a change in his attitude in later years when some of the younger Jews who had made their way in foreign lands, especially in the United States, gave material evidence of their belief in non-sectarian charity to which his foundation, Asyl Neuenberg, became a beneficiary. My brother Moise, in his will, had made provisions for a pro rata distribution of a goodly sum to the needy in our home town, and the largest share of this went to the Protestant majority.

The Catholics had their daily masses, vespers, and confessions, and many more holidays and fasts than the Protestants. The regalia and ecclesiastical dress, significant parts of their ceremonies, lent color and mysticism to the genuflections and motions accentuating their chanted litanies. Most impressive were the Corpus Christi processions. Some of the Catholic families would erect outside of their houses, tabernacle-like booths out of shrubs and flowers and

place an altar and prie-Dieu in them. An early morning procession, headed by children, followed by the priest, the choir and the altar boys, and the congregationwould chantingly wend its way from one of these booths to the other. The route was strewn with grass and flowers.

The cure, Father Louis, was very well liked for his democratic spirit and natural human touch. He was a frequent visitor at our house. Among his intimates were our Jewish teacher and one of the Protestant ones. It was at a get-together of these three friends when the Protestant teacher, a humorist, told the story of the old maid, confessing that she sinned in allowing a man to kiss her and returning the favor. Said the priest, in surprise: "What? a woman of your age?"

Old maid: "It was forty years ago."

Priest: "And you are confessing it only now?"

Old maid: "Oh, I confessed it then and many times since!"

Priest: "But why?"

Old maid: "You see, I still like to talk about it."

About 1888, a separate church building for the Catholics was completed.

Before drawing a picture of the Jewish religious life in my town and in my day, I want to refer to some of the atrocities that were inflicted on the Jews of Alsace, suffered by them with an indomitable will to survive and serve.

History records Jewish life in Alsace as far back as the ninth and tenth centuries. Through all the years, the Jew was made the scapegoat for all that was wrong, and he was unjustly accused of the very sins of those who would detract attention from their own crimes. We read of the burning of Jews en masse, the defilement of synagogues and cemeteries at Strasbourg, Colmar, and Mulhouse in the year 1290 and again in 1349; the massacres at Rufach in 1338 during the Black Plague. Ritual murder charges were brought whenever, for any reason, it was expedient to quench the thirst for blood of the enraged mob.

The massacres at Bachstein in 1657 testify to the continuance of this fiendish work up to the acquisition of Alsace by Louis XIV in 1695. A great step toward the emancipation of the Jew was taken by the release from the poll tax in 1784 and a further one by the award of full citizenship in 1791.

In the War of Reformation especially, the Jew was continually wedged in between Catholic and Lutheran controversy.

The French Jew was inclined to exaggerate the spirit of tolerance shown him by his country. My contention in making this assertion is that somehow the Jewish population of France was less than one and one-half percent of the whole, until the reconquest of Alsace-Lorraine in 1918,

through which the French Jewish population was nearly doubled. Then there is too that indelible blot, the infamous Dreyfus case in the 1890's. Among the outstanding advocates of rights to French Jews, I want to mention despite all his other faults, Napoleon I. Also men like Mirabeau, Emile Zola, and Clemenceau, Abbe Gregoire.

In my time, Jewish religious observance in our country was along a line of most rigorous orthodoxy and fundamental dogma, saturated with age-old superstitions and a stubborn insistence on out-dated form, frozen by habit of long use. Social, educational, even commercial activities were consciously or unconsciously influenced by it.

Reform Judaism had begun to take root in some of the large German communities. It was shunned in Alsace, as would have been the introduction of ritual from one of the Christian denominations. The orthodox Jew felt that the basic motive for reform was a desire to be more like our non-Jewish neighbors, and I believe there was much justification for this argument. The introduction of prayers in the language of the country, the organ, abbreviations of ritual, all were classified as imitation of the Gentile. I recall the tempestuous revolt against a regulation made by the leader of our congregation with reference to dress at funerals. Some of this was probably inspired by the insistence on the sackcloth-and-ashes atmosphere that is connected with grief and bereavement throughout biblical history, but I think much

of it was objection to the necessity of change of attire from that worn in shop or stable. Under the new rule the blue smock, the cloth cap and the wooden shoes had to be shed for more presentable dress. A rebellious minority cried "imitating the Goy." There was objection from the reactionaries to any innovation and the small nucleus of the more progressive could at best only achieve a compromise.

On the whole, our Jewish community had a fine tradition. Every generation had brought forth the kind of men and women that everywhere in the world make up that saving remnant for whose sake the Lord has saved Israel. Every day between sunrise and sunset there were three synagogue services. Adding to these the observance of extra ceremonies and customs at birth, sickness, death, joys, and sorrows, one can readily see the all-absorbing demand congregational life made on the individual.

Before writing about the synagogue services, I must attempt to draw a picture of this attractive center of activities. The synagogue was placed in a spot about 150 feet back of the main street, adjoining the Protestant minister's residence. Through iron gates one reached a court with large, spreading acacia trees. Broad stone steps led to two entrances, side by side. The one to the main auditorium for the men, the other to a balcony for the women. The men first entered a foyer, with closets for the ceremonial silverware, also the accumulation of Mappes (also called Windel). These

Synagogue at Ingwiller,
before 1940



bench, and two large Menorahs. This was reached by two steps from two sides, built of marble and covered with a beautiful rug. The altar, the Torah covers, and the Ark curtains always matched and the color scheme and fabrics varied according to occasion, from red velvet on Pesach to white satin on Rosh-Hashonah and Yom Kippur, and black on Tishe b'Av.

The lighting was by candles. These were a yard long in the Menorahs, and many of smaller size were set in large chandeliers suspended from the ceiling. The large candles were donated by the mourners, by observers of Jahrzeit, and in celebration of joyful anniversaries. Donations of candles in gratitude of special events were a popular custom, one that has endured, especially in Catholic churches, to this day. I cannot refrain from telling here the story of two truckmen hauling a heavy load in a terrific rainstorm. Their truck got off the road into a ditch and the wheels were stuck in mud up to the hubs. Coaxing, swearing, hitting the team, all was of no avail. In desperation, Pete, one of the men, folded his hands in prayer: "Dear Lord, if you will help us get the truck out of this ditch, I'll give a candle to the church as tall as that poplar there." At this, George said: "Pete, there ain't no candles as tall as that poplar." Pete, nudging George: "You simp, after we are out of this do you think I'll worry about the candle?"

P 77
Missing

There were the traditional stone floors, and to add to this discomfort in winter, there was no heat. I can still feel the frost-bitten toes begotten in a two-hour Sabbath morning service in below zero temperature. Even the fires of Hell, supposed to be right under us, would have had an appeal to us on such occasions. The seats were privately owned or rented and the value fixed according to location. Those nearest to the Ark were the choicest and the fact that each owner had Jewish neighbors did not depreciate his property, as is the malicious contention of many Gentile property owners with Semitic neighbors.

We had no Rabbi living in our town, but we were in the circuit of the one at Bourwiller, who spent two or three weekends annually with us, and officiated at funerals and occasional weddings.

Cantor Kallmann, though advanced in years, had a very fine baritone voice. While on the whole he stuck to the traditional music, he had the ambition of introducing new hits for the Yigdal, L'cho Daudi, or for the Hallel. These were adaptations from obscure operettas or many obsolete folk songs. At one time, on the half holiday, Chal-Hamood Pesach, he used for his Hodu, a student drinking song laden with enough beer-atmosphere to make the Chazan guilty of heresy for introducing this specimen of Chometz in a Passover service. Consumption of beer on Pesach ranked as capital crime against dietary laws.

He prepared the Bar-Mitzvahs. He did the ritual killing as Schochet (slaughterer of animals). Thursday, or the day before holidays were busy season for him. One had to stand in line holding a fighting rooster or a suspecting hen for one's turn in the Schechterei (ritual slaughter of animal). He derived a fair part of his income from Mi Sheberachs, blessings pronounced by him on those called to the Torah, their families and friends.

He was agent for several Jewish book firms, and also was a professional bookbinder. This was not a big business. The careless handling of religious books was considered a sin. This developed a natural instinct for the preservation and scrupulous care of them. A prayer book accidentally dropped on the floor had to be kissed, as if to sooth an injury it had thus sustained. If it was a book as important as the Chumish (Five Books of Moses) or a Machzor (Holy Day Prayers) a fast of a half or a full day was imposed by the head of the house. Dropping a Torah meant forty fast days for all adults of the congregation.

A bigger business for the Chazan was the sale of T'fillin (phylacteries) or Tallesim (prayer shawls). Every Bar-Mitzvah had to get them.

Every male wore an Arbah Kansev. While this was a home made accessory out of flannel, the Chazan supplied the Tsitsis (tassels) that were arranged in a prescribed manner

and attached to the four corners of this regalia. These strands were kissed at certain points of the prayers.

For Sukkoth, the sale of Lulavs and Esrogim (palm branches and citrons) brought from Palestine, together with the trimming of the Lulav with fragrant evergreen and myrtle twigs, was a substantial business. There was great rivalry among the purchasers for the best of the crop. Despite the vast field of his activities, the Chazan found time to do some fishing in the summer and card playing at all seasons.

Since there was no all-time Rabbi to differ and disagree with him, the Schammes came in for the practice of this indoor sport.

The post of Schammes usually went from father to son. Ours, Sissel's Yokef, was an easy-going man of good appearance. Dressed at services in the prescribed uniform of black broadcloth tail-coat with Royal-blue velvet collar and cuffs, trousers to match, gilt-buttoned fancy vest, black plush boat shaped hat with rosette of gold braid, a heavy silver chain around the neck and staff in hand, he looked like a combination of the Sheriff of Nottingham and the Admiral of his Majesty's Navy. His functions were manifold. He was responsible for the proper decorum and he was in perfect control of things in the male section of the synagogue, but the wagging tongues in the upper region were the bone of his contention. He had authority to fine offenders and exercised this freely, but he was usually amenable to appeasement by a

sample of good cooking, resulting in a retraction.

He was in charge of the distribution of Mitzvahs. A Mitzvah in this case meant being called to the Torah. This privilege could be bought at a fixed amount for a specific part, the prices varying according to the importance of it. For holidays the demand exceeded the supply, and the Mitzvahs were auctioned off. The privilege of reading the Haftarah Jonah on Yom Kippur brought the highest bid of the year. Yokef was the master of ceremonies at these sales and his Nigun (intonation) would have put to shame the monotonous babble of the tobacco auctioneers on the radio, mumbling about the choice of the crop that makes their sponsor's product superior. The financial evaluation of the Mitzvahs varied greatly between the communities. In our town a minimum starting bid was one franc (twenty cents), while in neighboring Weinburg, with a Jewish population of less than fifty, a more modest standard of value prevailed, as the following little episode shows.

Weinburg was situated within the distance limit permitted for a Saturday or holiday walk, that being approximately a two and a half mile round trip. My father, in his youth, and several of his friends would delight in going there on a Schabbos afternoon to swell the Shul attendance. The Mitzvahs for the afternoon were sold in the fashion described above. The natives started with as little as one cent and raised each

other a half cent at a time. The visiting city slickers "ganged up on them," taking longer strides. After five or six raises, five cents had been reached and tempers kept mounting with the bids. The native standing behind my father had bid six cents; my father jumped to ten cents; the rival swung a vicious right to back of father's head and shouted: "Chammer! (jackass) why don't you bid a million right away?"

A very profitable part of the work of the Schammes was the care of the cemetery. The Beth Hakvores (cemetery) was then a century old and people came from the four corners of the earth to visit the graves of ancestors (Kever Oveth Sein). This yielded substantial gratuities, especially from Americans. Like the head porters in big hotels, he accumulated a good sized bank account. Trying to impress me on one of my visits there, he showed me several resting places with defaced identifications, remarking: "Only I know who lies there." I saw to it that a record was made that would be more permanent than his mortal memory. I'm sure he never forgave me for this interference.

Another sideline of the Schammes was that of zwicken. The very pious Jews permitted no razor to shave their growing beards, and zwicken was a trimming by scissors as well and as closely as possible. For those men who were averse to the wearing of beards and not satisfied with a stubble that at best would not improve their appearance much, there was a

hair-removing salve, the application of which had to be in competent hands as far as timing was concerned. If scraped off too soon, it was ineffective. A few seconds of delay meant burning of the skin. I am sure the Madame Esther of today would not recommend it for beauty treatment.

The administrative work was in the hands of a Commission (Council) of five or six men presided over by the Parness (President). Our neighbor, Mr. Raphael Liewer, filled this place during most of my years at home. He was succeeded by Mr. Felix Bloch. The congregation was fortunate in having these leaders. They were men of big affairs, with clear vision, and exercised a progressive influence, lifting the community high above the level of the average small town viewpoint. They possessed the diplomacy required in keeping the peace in a group living closely together and having all the traits, good and bad, that one finds in the large city, only more exposed. In crisis, these leaders acted with good judgement and authority. Their motto was: "Nur Sholom." (Only Peace)

Life was more burdensome then, since none of the conveniences we now take for granted had yet been invented. We had neither gas nor electricity nor running water. The workday was long and tedious and the Sabbath and festivals were welcomed with a joy that we in these switch-turning days can hardly conceive. Even those in the most modest circumstances prepared meals for these days that were banquets compared with

the simple fare of the week. Most of the men were absent from home in pursuit of their livelihood for four or five days of the week, often in places where no Jews lived and where no kosher food could be had. Even the religiously frivolous had great respect for the dietary laws. Only he who has lived in that period can fully visualize what a day of rest at home, with better than usual food meant to the people of that time.

Preparation for the Sabbath began on Thursday with housecleaning, marketing, the setting of dough for bread and cake. Very few were so poor that they could not afford a Berches and a Kugelhopf. The former was a Mohn-seed covered bread-twist for the Sabbath; the latter, a cake baked in a fluted pan, with a hole in the center. When we were all still at home, my parents would rise about four A.M. on Fridays to bake the bread for the week as well as cakes and pies. What I have named Berches was the equivalent of what is now called Challah. It was made of the same dough as were its brother loaves, but shaped in different form to mark it for the distinction that was given it, serving in the Kiddush and Motzi services on the Sabbath and holidays. The dough was twisted into a braid, strewn with poppy-seed (Mohn) and brushed with egg. The Challah was a small portion of the dough, the Priest's share that the Jew set aside for the poor from his harvests of the field, in fact all of God's material benefactions to him. For the sake of convenience, this dividend of dough was burned

up, but in manifold manner, redeemed by money, placed in the Challah box, to be used for definite charitable purposes. In our town, the Challah Geld was collected for Yerusholayim (Jerusalem).

In our brick bake oven the heat was sealed to serve after the baking as the food-warmer for the meals cooked on Friday for the Sabbath, or on the day preceding holidays, for the holidays. As the family grew smaller, home baking was abandoned, and the prepared doughs were taken to the professional bakers. For food warming we then installed a Stubchen, a sort of fireless cooker. This was an oval tin container in which a charcoal fire, started late Friday, would smolder, and the Sabbath noon meal would be set in it. This was called gesetztes Essen. Meat, rice, barley, mixed in one pot simmering for long hours, made a pappy brew in which a spoon could stand erect. Many an American gourmand of the 80's and 90's still smacks his lips in delightful remembrance of this luscious and substantial repast, for which the New York Jewish restaurateurs like Gansemeyer, Sinsheimer, Felix, and others were as famous as was Cafe Martin (Lafayette) for its bouillabaise Marseillaise. Only a few families owned this miraculous contraption, and most people sent their pots containing their meal together with the Schabbos Kugel (a chalet-like pudding) to the public bakery. Much humor has sprung from the incidents arising from an occasional mixup of pots at the port of call

at noon Saturday. I will only tell one.

Schlome (meaning Man of Peace) fought with his patient spouse Malke (Queen) every day from morning till night. He was gruff and avaricious. When the wife one Schabbos called for the Kugel at the bakery, there was only one pot left. When Schlome at table lifted the lid, ready to pounce on his Leibspeise (his most relished dish) - behold! there was a bigger and finer piece of cookery than he was used to. In luring voice, Schlome said: "Help yourself, my darling Malke." Malke, stunned by the shock of this sudden change of attitude, answered: "After you, Schlome."

"No, sweetheart, after you, Malkele!" Hither and thither the courtesies. Finally Malke helped herself, took a bite and confusedly asked, "Why this sudden change? I cannot believe it." Schlome answered: "We got this fine Kugel. I can hear him who got our little runt saying, 'He who has our Kugel should choke on the first bite!'" He then relapsed to form and tigerlike, pounced on the rest and gulped it down.

The Sabbath was ushered in by the lighting of the lights in the home, followed by synagogue services. After this, the family gathered at the supper table, took part in the Kiddush and Motzi services before the meal. Our family stayed at table, nibbling at nuts, fruits or pastries. During the winter months, we sang the Z'mires after the Friday evening meal. These are table songs expressing gratitude for the food. I find

that the introductory phrase that is repeated before each verse shows a similarity of melody to that of the Hatikvah. I am sure that our tune for T'zur Misholau Ochalnu Borchu Emunau is father to that of the later composition of the Zionist Song of Hope (Hatikvah). Occasionally friends would drop in, lonely folks whose families had shrunk to few. Most people, however, stayed with their own.

Bedtime was regulated by the Schabbos Goye. In households that had no maids, or employed Jewish ones, the Schabbos Goye made the rounds, extinguishing lights and keeping fires going, and she had to cover a large territory.

The Sabbath morning services started at seven-thirty in summer and later hour in winter. No food could be taken until after Schachris, the morning prayers, which meant either getting up early to say them at home, or fast until about ten o'clock. After the morning services, children visited grandparents to be blessed by them.

The men of our town, divided into two age-groups, then met with a leader who was versed in holy writ who presided at a Lernen, an interpretation of the day's Torah portion. I have already mentioned the reading of the Tzinnah Rinna by my grandmother. This seemed to be a matter for the older and more pious women only.

After the midday dinner, most of the men went to the cafes for games of dominoes (card playing was forbidden) for gossip and tall stories. Others gathered in street groups

to get the week's news from the inland. Afternoon services were held at about four and evening services at sunset. The official close of the Sabbath was the Havdole, the ceremony that is the bridge between the Sabbath or holiday and the work-week. The spice box, Psom Box, one of the implements of this service, has been preserved in families from generation to generation, and can still be found in some of our American homes. Spices were considered the most delicate stimulants and were used at Havdole to soothe the spirit of the Jew, depressed by the outgoing Sabbath or festival.

Schabbos was the day for formal visits. In a town of our size, people met frequently during the week or even dropped in on each other in a casual way; but the expression of good wishes or sympathy or the payment of courtesies for one reason or another called for a formal visit. The guest was then received in the salon and asked to sit on the canape, the seat of honor reserved for such events. A Kirsch (cherry brandy) a framboise (raspberry syrup in water) or at least a glass of sugar water and cakes were offered in a spirit of sincere hospitality, or at least to conform with convention.

The Schabbos holiness was superseded only by Yom Kippur. There were several of them with special significance commemorating certain occurences, mostly sad ones in the history of our people, such as black Schabbos, which is the Schabbos before Tishe b'Ab. More joyous ones were Schabbos

Channukah, Schabbos Hagodel and Schabbos Nachme.

There are three categories of festivals. Pesach, Shevuoth, Sukkoth are one. Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur are another; then there are the semi-holidays like Purim and Channukah. Each one brought its own unique manner of special celebration and ceremony.

Pesach was especially welcome, for it followed weeks of hectic activity. To make a household yomtevtig is super spring house-cleaning, starting immediately after Purim, four weeks earlier. As every crumb of chometz (leavened) was removed from a room, the room was sealed so that in the last stages, some families virtually camped in kitchen or foyer or barn, and weather permitting, even outdoors. At the very end of this period, the regular kitchenware had to be quarantined in a place that was as securely locked as any prison, to yield its space in the scoured kitchen to its aristocratic Pesach substitute.

Matzohs were a cash and carry commodity. The licensed baker supplied the dough and did the baking. The packing and transportation was up to the customer. The special closet in which we stored our seventy-five to one hundred pounds was a sort of holiest of holy, not to be opened until after the burning of the last chometz.

On the evening before Seder, the heads of the household placed crumbs of bread in a few corners of the last room

to be kaschered (cleansed). They then swept the crumbs with a goose wing into a cloth, tied this around splints or a discarded wooden kitchen-utensil, saying prayers written for this ceremony. This was called Chometz badiken. Before ten on the next morning, Erev Pesach, these symbols of chometz were burned outside of the premises. In our town the children would collect them and bring them to the city dump for a bonfire. This done, the eight-day festival of the unleavened bread was ushered in.

The noon meal was already yomtevtig, but no matzohs was served until Seder. The traditional fare for the lunch of that day was spiced beef, mashed potatoes and red beets, each epitomizing some incident connected with the origin of the festival.

On this day the first-born males had to fast until noon in gratitude for the passing over of the Jewish homes, when the Lord inflicted the plague of the smiting of the first-born on the Egyptians.

No ceremony ever made a deeper and more lasting impression on the average Jew than the Seder in his home. I will not describe this ceremony as a whole, hoping that anyone who may ever have the will to read my story will be familiar with this function and its significance. I will, however, dwell on parts that were unique in our home, and I love to think, were handed down from generation to generation, and were the brain-children of some of the many Rabbis and cantors

of the Uhry geneology.

In text and melody, we followed the original Haggadah. However, we paraphrased some of the salient parts in French-German-Hebrew songs, taking liberties with the French. Here is such a version of the Echod Mi Yodea (One, Who Knows It?).

Solo:
Und wer will drum, will drum predigen?
Chorus:
C'est Boruch Hu, Uvoruch Shemau.

Solo:
Und wer will drum, will drum predigen,
En un?

Chorus:
Un, c'est Boruch Hu, Uvoruch Shemau.

*Solo: Und wer will drum, will drum predigen?
Chorus: C'est Boruch Hu, Uvoruch Shemau.
Solo: Und wer will drum, will drum predigen,
En deux?

Chorus: Deux sont les tables de Moise,
Un, c'est Boruch Hu, Uvoruch Shemau.

*Repeat first three lines --
En trois?
Chorus: Trois sont les peres Abraham, Isaac et Jacob
Deux sont les tables de Moise
Un c'est Boruch Hu, Uvoruch Shemau.

*Repeat first three lines --
En quatre?
Chorus: Quatre sont les meres Sora, Rifke, Rochel et Leah
Trois, etc., - deux, etc., - un, etc.

*Repeat first three lines --
En cinque?
Chorus: Cinque sont les Biblayottes
Quatre, etc., returning to Un.

*Repeat first three lines --
En six?
Chorus: Six sont les Mischnayottes
Cinque, etc., returning to Un.

*Repeat first three lines --
En sept?
Chorus: Sept sont les Sabattons
Six, etc., returning to Un.

*Repeat first three lines --
En huit?
Chorus: Huit sont les circoncisions
Sept, etc., returning to Un.

*Repeat first three lines --
En neuf?
Chorus: Neuf sont les neuf jours d'Ab
Huit, etc., returning to Un.

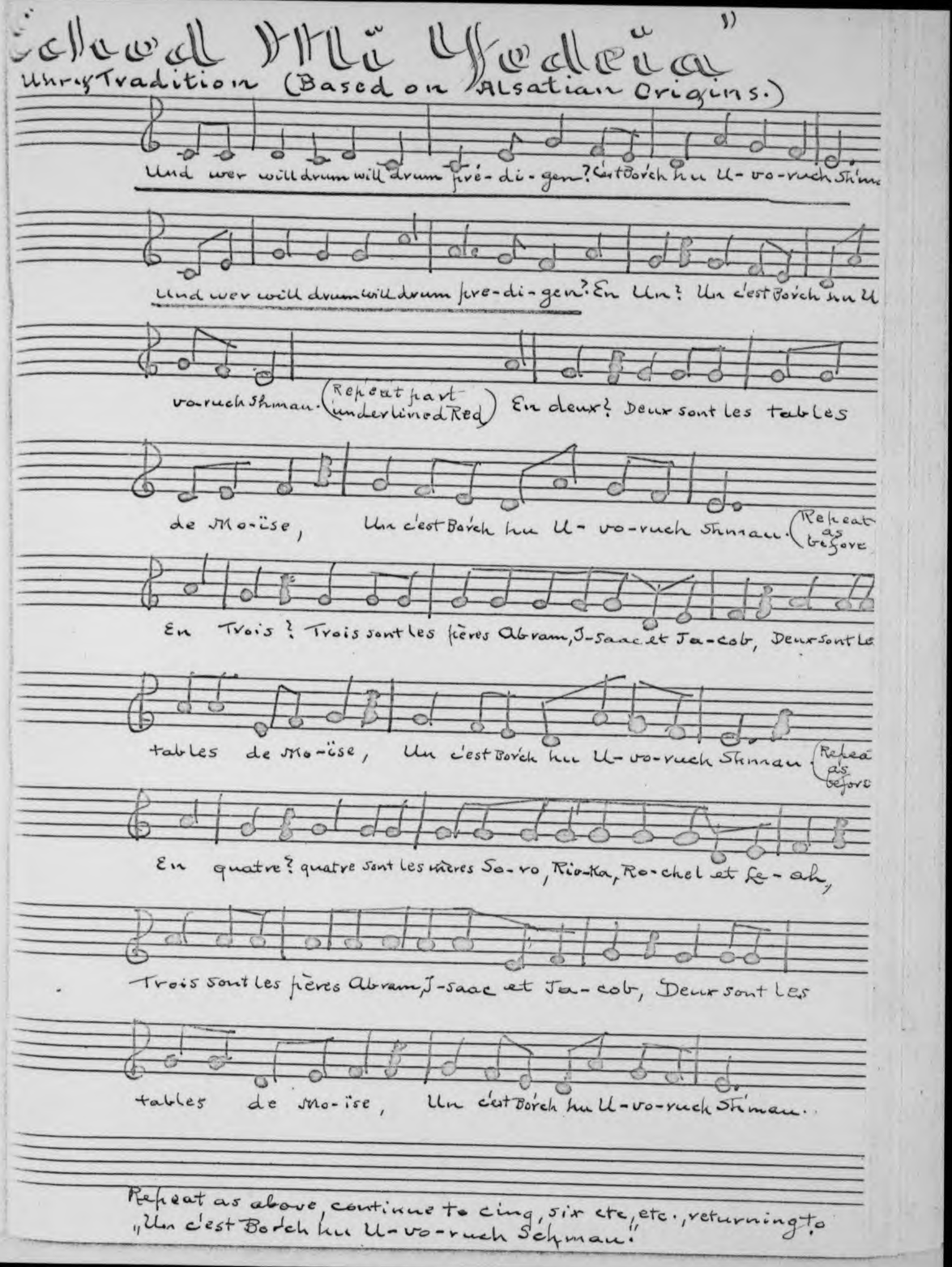
*Repeat first three lines --
En dix?
Chorus: Dix sont les commandements
Neuf, etc., returning to Un.

*Repeat first three lines --
En onze?
Chorus: Onze sont les Etoilons
Dix, etc., returning to Un.

*Repeat first three lines --
En douze?
Chorus: Douze sont les frereons
Onze, etc., returning to Un.

*Repeat first three lines --
En treize?
Chorus: Treize sont les Midayottes (Middot de Maimonide)
Douze, etc., returning to Un.

Another such song was the Hebrew-Yiddish-German one, the refrain of which is the Hebrew "Himnaylo lonu V'lo Yishoh Shomer Yisroel." It was probably composed at the time when the fourth cup of wine in the service had transposed the composer to the "Sweet Adeline" mood, that brought forth the drowsy drinking song of that name, with the difference that he appealed for the protecting hand of our God and not the arms of Morpheus, to sleep in.



Being a family with six fair singing voices, we always attracted several neighbors and friends who joined with us in the after-dinner portion, or even in the dessert, to give them legitimate status in the Mezumon benschen (after-dinner grace).

While some special food was associated with each holiday, Pesach called for a greater variety of these dishes, tasting differently, due to the use of Matzoh meal. The Matzoh-Klees (matzoh balls) universal favorites, loomed in all sizes and many dishes from soup to dessert. With the third day, the Chol-Hamoed began. The distribution of Easter eggs among the children was one of the existing customs then, as it is in part, even now. They were colored by being boiled in red onion skins. This was also the day when we were sent to our non-Jewish friends to bring them from two to five Matzohs carefully placed in a napkin. This courtesy called for an exchange gift of some raw eggs. The degree of liberality of the recipient, as remembered from year to year, was the basis for the quantitive allotment of the Matzohs. There was great competition in these deliveries, for the early bird caught most eggs. After four days of this half-holiday came the two concluding days, and with them the gloomy anticipation of "Rumpels-night."

The night of the outgoing festival meant the transfer of all the Pesach kitchen utensils to their assigned berth and

the releasing from quarantine of the regular sets. Everyone had to pitch in, and in our house it meant climbing and descending three flights of stairs, in cautious step, to insure safe landing at either end.

The next holiday, Shevuoth, the Feast of the Weeks, followed at the close of the 49th day from the second day of Pesach, or on the sixth day of Sivan. This festival of law came at the end of the Omer. From the second Seder night to Erev-Shevuoth, Jews omered, counted the days, after the evening prayer, in a form giving the serial number of the day in Omer and stating the weeks and days that had elapsed. For example: This is the 33rd day in Omer, that is four weeks and five days, in Omer. This was said in Hebrew. Several women neighbors regularly lost track of the count and would call for help at our house. I give part credit to my good standing in mathematics to this practice in division and subtraction.

Joyous festivals like weddings, also pleasure trips, were not permitted in these weeks, except on Rosh-Chodesh and Lag b'omer. Rosh Chodesh is the beginning of the month. Lag b'omer is the 33rd day of Omer. Lag is composed of Lamed and Gimmel, from the Hebrew alphabet; Gimmel the third letter meaning three, Lamed means thirty. Superstition also made this a period of time to avoid risks such as swimming and tree climbing. I managed to get my broken arms, sprained ankles, and holes in the head in off-season.

Shevuoth, coming in late May or June, when the lilacs were in bloom and all nature dressed as a beautiful bride, was a festival of joy. It is the commemoration of the day when Israel received the law on Sinai.

The synagogue was bedecked with flowers and foliage and young birch trees were set in small hills of grass-covered sod at the approaches and in the auditorium.

On the second day there was dancing. I recall the first and only confirmation services in our congregation in 1881. My brother, Emile, was one of the class. It was a beautiful and sensational innovation that, however, brought enough dissension to omit it ever after. The reactionaries, isolated in the narrow walls of frozen custom, a type surviving to this day, chiefly objected to the participation of women or girls in any main-floor synagogue services. Like in our day, there were the jealousies brought forth by the distribution of the parts in the services, or even a better-styled dress on some girl. Is it surprising that I unconsciously became a youthful advocate of woman suffrage as early as 1891?

I will leave this category of festivals and rather continue in the calendar rotation. Rosh Hashonah comes next. To prepare the Jewish soul for the spiritual purge ahead, there were the days of Seliches, seven days before Rosh Hashonah. Psalms and prayers of medi&ation were added to the regular ritual of the morning service.

To enable the men, especially those whose business took them out of town, to start their activities at the accustomed time, it was necessary to assemble a Minyan (quorum) at a very early morning hour. Four-thirty or five o'clock was the time set.

Even before I was old enough to count in Minyan, I was drafted as a living alarm clock. It was the work of the Schammes to perform this revoille. Folks still wonder who wakes the bugler. Our Schammes was a sound sleeper and my father was not. When father had doubts, howould call me to wake this bugler, who in turn assigned a part of his calling-route to me. There were no doorbells and the method was to knock on the shutters of ground floors, or to throw stones at those in the upper stories. The reward from disgruntled sore-heads aroused from slumber, was a morning curse in a vocabulary that would be a cussing sailor's delight. I even recall an occasional shower of cold water to cool my ardor in this task.

Rosh Hashonah, the Jewish New Year, on the first day of Tishri, the seventh month in the lunar year, was awaited in a serious mood. It ushered in a period of confession and repentance of sin, prayers for forgiveness, and supplication to be inscribed in the Book of Life. It was a time of inventory of credits gained and debits incurred, culminating in the balancing of accounts between self and our fellow man, with God as our Judge.

The sounding of the Shofar to arouse man to penitence and prepare him to stand before the Most High with a pure soul on the day of atonement, is one of the solemn ceremonies. The orthodox way is the blowing of prescribed tones from the hollow horn of a ram. Modern composers have arranged a Shofar service in which a French horn takes the place of its bony ancestor. Accompanied by organ and string instruments, these compositions rank with those of Kol-Nidre and Viddu, and penetrate to the very depths of my soul. I admit that it took me some time to become accustomed to this innovation, and I can understand the objection to it from those who are staunch fundamentalists.

There was much prayer and song, in a sober key, more serious than on the festivals. This was one of two occasions when the Jew said some prayers falling on his knees. This was called Kaurim Fallen.

The wearing of the shroud by the men and white garments by the women, together with the white dress-up of the synagogue, gave the impression of the anteroom to the High Court of judgement. A circumstance in connection with the special altar drapery on the High Holy Days left an everlasting impression on me, a recollection that saddens me to this day.

My mother's uncle donated a set of curtains, also altar and Torah covers to the congregation. They were of white satin, richly embroidered with gold and silver, and the community was as proud of this possession as a young bride would be

of her wedding gown. My parents were the custodians, and every year after the Day of Atonement, the set was carefully put away in a wooden box that fitted the top of a wardrobe in which our most precious possessions and heirlooms were kept. A leak in a chimney seeped through the protective packing and caused a large spot on the most conspicuous part of a curtain. The accident was unavoidable, yet one feels responsibility and is saddened by the view of a blemish on an article for which one feels sentimental affection. Vicious minds and venomous tongues got in their work, despite the season of good will and forgiveness. This cut deeply, and each yearly hanging of the curtain brought back mixed feelings of unwarranted remorse and the hurt one senses at the sight of marred beauty.

As now, this was the season for the exchange of New Year wishes and the burying of hatchets, often to be dug up again when business was resumed as usual. Who has not heard that form of wish with the accent on the "also" as: "I wish you also a happy New Year!" Why not? One more, and they cost nothing. Or Yussef to Jake, with whom he had been on bad terms: "I wish you the same you wish me!" Jake: "Commencing again?"

The dipping of apple in honey was a part of the pre-meal ceremony.

Another unique service was that of Taschlich on the afternoon of the second day. Prayers were said beside a flowing brook or a fresh water lake inhabited by fish. The fish

with eyes turned upwards were to teach us that for help and hope we must turn heavenward. Bread crumbs thrown in the water were the symbols of sins cast off. This ceremony is still widely observed by pious Jews in our own New York City, as I have often witnessed at the Central Park Reservoir. Partly as a sort of advance practice for the big event seven days ahead, the day after Rosh Hashonah was observed as the Fast of Gedaliah. Gedaliah was a governor of Palestine and was assassinated on the third day of Tishri.

This was also the beginning of the days of T'Shuva, days of repentance, climaxed by Yom Kippur on the tenth day of Tishri. The ritual of these days was very similar to that of the Seliches, and the general mood was that of the ante-chamber of the High Tribunal where judgement would be rendered on the day of atonement.

A ceremony on Erev Yom Kippur that seemed to be on the wane, for only a few of the most pious observed it, was Malkus Schlagen (Malkus meaning punishment by lashes). One confessor of sin, in the position of the above described Kaurim Fallen, recited his evil ways while another man would mildly lash him on the back with a leather money-belt. The money-belt was probably the symbol of the most prevalent instrument for wrong-doing. This was a reciprocal arrangement, the parties exchanging positions with an opportunity for tit-for-tat to the second one in the use of the strap. The gradual

extinction of this custom no doubt ran parallel with the deterioration of the old belts that in years gone by had served in the double capacity of bank and safe-deposit box. This was in days when our people were compelled to have their possessions in liquid and mobile form. I have been told that this outmoded conveyor of property has been reinstated by many of our unfortunate brothers who in the years of Nazi persecution had to conceal and transport a remnant of their possessions to harbors of safety.

A home ceremony performed a few days before Yom Kippur was that of Kapores. This was for the male members of the household only, and was to be a sacrificial offering in the process of pleading for the cancellation of wrongs committed. The sinner would say a prayer. At the end of it, the head of the house would swing a live rooster in a circle over his head, chanting a refrain. Thus, the innocent bird had the sins first heaped on its own head, and then lost its head altogether under the knife of a Schochet. A part of the meat was sent to the poor, but most of it was consumed in the holiday meals by the family. The use of a live fish was permissible, but less convenient. When this by some was called hocus-pocus and superstition, there was great controversy. The pros argued that the fact that the prescribed prayer for this service was a part of the standard Roedelheimer prayer-book was enough to establish authenticity for it. In our home, my orthodox

father, with a common sense leaning to progressive thought, released us, his sons, but continued the service for himself.

A matter connected with the culinary end of the household was the Erub Tabshilin. This ceremony was necessary when the Sabbath immediately followed a holiday, i.e. when the holiday started on Wednesday evening. It represented a link in the preparation of the Sabbath meals. A piece of meat or fish representing the start in this preparation was set aside and to it could be added on Friday, the second day of Yomtev, that which was needed for the Sabbath. Special prayers were read by the heads of the household and a gift of the food or money redemption for it was made to the poor.

A tense moment in the synagogue services on that evening was that of transition from Mincha to Mariv, marking the beginning of the holiday. The Schammes would mount the altar and call out, "If some one has forgotten Erub Tabshilin, hurry, hurry!" There were as a rule a few absent-minded couples, courageous people who braved the unkind hissing of the congregation, and then faced each other angrily, hurrying home to make last-minute amends.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is observed and respected to this day even by those that hang by the frailest thread on the periphery of Jewish life and observance. The form of celebration in the era in which my account is placed was pretty uniform. It would be presumptuous on my part to go

into detail of explanation of the sober ritual of that day, but it will not be amiss to mention some of the climactic moments in our services as I proceed from Kol Nidre through to Neilah.

The Kol Nidre started with sunset. At the conclusion of the three to four-hour service, most of the congregation went home, but a number of pious men remained in devout prayer throughout the night. The morning prayers, by the reassembled full congregation, started at six A.M. and with the exception of two recesses of ten minutes each, continued until after sunset, ending with a short blast of the Shofar.

One of the high functions of the day was the Duchenen. This was symptomatic of the annual entry of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies, and can only be done by a Kohan, attended by several Levites.

The chastising fast and the earnestness of the prayers, the chest-beating in self-accusation, and the confession of sin had their purifying effect on the souls of most people. This manifested itself in many ways. The most immediate one was a gesture of friendliness in the exchange of inquiries at the end of the day as to the fast and the breaking of it.

After this long day (Gentiles called it the "long day holiday") of physical and spiritual chastisement, the regulations called for a very early assembly for the next morning's services. The reason given for this rule was to avoid the possible criticism of unfriendly Gentiles, who might refer to

our attitude of complacency immediately after having gained the Lord's forgiveness, in letting Him wait the next morning.

Under the orthodox rule that a boy must observe three of the regular fast days preceding his Bar-Mitzvah, Yom Kippur became my day of initiation in this duty of abstenance. I did so much of it in the four years following, that I took self-imposed dispensation from it soon after and ever since.

Sukkoth comes on the evening of the fourth day following Yom Kippur. The building of a Sukkah, symbol of the tabernacles, the portable booths that sheltered our forebears in the forty years of wandering through the Wilderness, was a pleasant event.

In some of the old houses, a room immediately under the roof could be converted into a Sukkah. Most people had a temporary one, built from plain boards, somewhere close to their home. Our family owned a collapsible one that could be set up like a house of blocks, each unit fitting in its intended place. To permit the view of sky and stars, it was open at the top, covered only by a layer of branches and foliage resting on a lattice frame. The interior walls were hung with white sheets and the transparent green ceiling was decorated with paper chains and baskets in vivid colors, as well as choice specimens of the fruits and vegetables of this, the harvest season. In the middle there was a Mogen Dovid, and from its center hung our Schabbos Lomp. Only the most

inclement weather would deter us from taking our meals there during the festival week. Sometimes this holiday and the rainy season would happen concurrently. I could never condone the prescribed prayers for rain in the ritual of this festival. The fun of dismantling the Sukkah and dividing the decorations was in a way a solace for the drab days ahead, after these weeks of celebration.

The last day of Sukkoth is Simchas Torah, a day of joy as its name indicates. In a Torah-procession through the synagogue, our Chazan actually waltzed to the music of Hallel, and even the elders, carrying scrolls, gave vent to their happy mood by swaying from side to side. On this day of rejoicing in the Torah, two honors were auctioned off, those of Chosen Ha Torah and Chosen B'reshith. The former usually went to an older man who chanted the last chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, the latter to a young man doing the same with the first chapter of Genesis. This ceremony epitomizes the continuity of Israel's heritage from generation to generation.

Eternal symbols in the Sukkoth ritual are the Lulav and Esrog, previously referred to in the account of the Chazan's many commercial ventures. The completely-trimmed Lulav and Esrog typify the four basic elements in Nature: air, fire, water, and earth. The tall Lulav symbolizes air, the yellow Esrog, fire, the myrtle, growing close to the ground, earth, the willow of the brook, water. There are other explanations

of these such as the citron signifying the human heart, the palm branch, the spine, the myrtle, the eye, and the willow, the lips.

The age-old proverb, "Nach Sukkoth kommen die Esrogim" is still quoted and better than most modern slogans emphasises the futility of hindsight or criticizes indecision or delay in execution. A Sukkoth symbol that has become somewhat obscure is the Shancle, a bunch of willows which during the services on Hoshanoh Rabbo was fiercely beaten, the falling leaves typifying the disappearing sins at the end of this period of penitential observance. Hoshanoh Rabbo is the day on which the fate of mortals is signed and sealed.

Sukkoth past meant the beginning of winter, and a spirit of depression gradually spread over the people. Ahead was a season of severe cold and isolating snow. There were long dark nights, sickness, and many added chores to the drudgery of country life. The insufficiency of heat by wood-burning stoves and illumination by oil lamps made early retiring attractive. This situation was graciously accepted, more so than the recent wartime curfew that our night-owls were "yammering" about.

The Channukah festival, observed for eight days from the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, is a joyous event that brightens the bleak midwinter days. It commemorates the dedication of the temple after it had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes. The heroism of the Maccabbees, that conquered big

armies, is ever an inspiration to those who feel that God is on the side of the just and that the spirit is mightier than the sword. Symbolizing the miracle of the eternal light found burning in the temple when it was cleansed, lights are lit by each male member of the family, starting with one on the first day, and adding one for each succeeding day, until eight are lighted. In our home we used copper and tin Menorahs, each having eight compartments for oil and wicks, and a separate place for the Schammes, the pilot light. While only the male members were to light lights, the females could substitute for those who were too young or absent from home. We were five males and forty lights with five pilots were a great illumination in that era of oil lamps and candles.

Each participant chanted the blessing over the lights in solo. That done, all the family joined in the Mooz Tsur (Rock of Ages).

Channukah, like Purim, was classified as a lesser holiday, and business went on as usual. It was a time for the exchange of gifts among the grownups and a distribution of money (Channukah Geld) to the children. Family and friends gathered for card games. The most popular game, however, was that of spinning the Trendel. This was a cube of wood, a large size dice, with a pointed stilt at the botton on which it would spin after it was given a twist by two fingers on a stem at the top. Money or walnuts were put up as a stake by the players, who took turns at the spinning. Letters from

the Hebrew alphabet were printed on four sides of the cube, the one appearing on top at the end of the spin indicated the player's share in the pot. Aleph meant all, Hay meant half, Noon meant nothing, Ayin meant Einsetzen (put up).

The synagogue services were augmented by a few special prayers and the lighting of Channukah lights on a large Menorah.

Schabbos Channukah was one of the special Sabbaths, like Schabbos Hagodel, Schabbos Nachme, Schabbos T'shuvah, Schwarz Schabbos. With Channukah, I always associate a pleasant injunction that seemed to be a local one. Starting with Channukah, walnuts had to be roasted before they could be eaten. The explanation was that some invisible worms had grown under the skin of the nut between harvesting time and then. I wonder if Pasteur ever knew of this? I call this injunction a pleasant one, and youwould know why if you ever tasted a roasted walnut.

After drab winter came Purim, festival of joy and harbinger of spring. It occurs on the fourteenth day of Adar and commemorates the miraculous rescue of our people from a death-sentence imposed by Haman, the Hitler of that day. The fate of our people has so often been in the balance. While many died heroic martyrs, we have as a people persisted and will continue to do so as long as we bring forth the Mordecais, Esthers, and Maccabbees that have courage, vision,

and faith in the justice of our cause and the divine purpose of our destiny.

The reading of the Megillah, the book of Esther, is the chief ritual of the day. Like the Torah, the Megillah was read from a parchment scroll rather than a book, and few Jewish home-libraries were without it. In a colloquial way "a long Megillah" still means a long-winded, tiresome epistle or manuscript, or a boring story.

Special foods for this day were the Purim-Kuchle (on the order of the more popular Haman-Tasche, that was not known in our district) and smoked beef, called Haman. The hanging of this meat in the chimney made it symbolic of the execution of the villainous monster.

Children were masked and received gifts and there were jolly parties, sometimes Purim balls. This was one day in the year when a Jew would be excused if he overindulged slightly in the content of the cup that cheers. There is an immortal proverb, born from the Purim spirit, referring to the unaccountable behavior of people or those who would choose the wrong moment for a conventional act, this being "all year he is a schicker (drunk) and on Purim nuchtern (sober)."

In addition to the above-named holidays, there were the many family Simchas (joys) such as Socher, Bris Milahs, Hollegrashs (or Hollekreisch) Bar-Mitzvahs, Gnasslegen (betrothels), weddings, Sanctification of a new scroll, or a

rare dedication of a remodeled or new synagogue.

The Socher was held within a week after the arrival of a first-born male, not preceded by a sister. Male friends of the family were invited to an evening ceremony, and refreshments were served.

A better celebration for all the boys, but one, was the Bris Milah, sometimes held in the synagogue, but more often in the home. At such occasions the godmother threw candies to the boys assembled outside the synagogue or house. Many a football player would have been in the making by this practice had the game been known to us then. A preferred position was held by the boys invited by the family to hold candles at the operation. They received their share in hand.

As a debutante never forgets her first ball, so does the recollection of my debut as a living candlestick at a Bris Milah remain vivid in my mind. I was six. A baby boy was born to one of our neighbors. They were among the well-to-do in our town and I had visions of mountains of candy and heaps of cookies. The moment for distribution had arrived. The godmother called out to the maid of the house: "Cerette, bring me the bag with the bonbons!" Flour bags, grain sacks, potato sacks, bursting at the seams, passed through my childish fantasy, but woe, the reality! Cerette brought a little velvet T'fillin-sack from which three candies were counted out to each one of us. After that day I took my

chances with the scrambling gang outside and usually fared much better.

This sad experience in my very early youth prepared me in a way for the many disappointments that this life of reality brings to all of us. It taught me not to set my expectations of the good too high and to accept what comes to me in a spirit of gratitude, or at least of resignation.

The Bris Milah, with the exception of a godmother and very few close female relatives, was a stag party. Not so, however, the Hollegrash. This was an occasion for both sexes. It was held on the first Sabbath that the mother went to the synagogue services. During the Torah reading, the father was called to the Torah to give the child's Hebrew name, whereupon a Mi Sheberach, a blessing, was made over the child and family. At the conclusion of the morning services the children would assemble at the baby's home.

Many superstitions were connected with childbirth. I remember seeing amulets hung about the room, and especially the cradle or basket. Most impressive among these were silver and gold coins sewed in gauze sacks, and hung chainlike over the baby's crib or body. In some localities it was the custom at the Hollegrash to inscribe over the crib and the mother's bed a circle in the air with a knife, a gesture of isolation of mother and child from any evil spirits that might have been hovering about them. The husky among the juvenile guests would lift up the cradle with the baby and shout, "Hollegrash,

Hollegrash, wie soll's Kind heissen?" (what shall the baby be named?) To this the parents replied giving the name which was repeated in chorus by all present. Distribution of almonds, walnuts, raisins and cookies followed, then rapid exit of the hungry mob.

I have never been able to get reliable information about the origin of the word Hollegrash. Legend has it that "Holle" was the nickname for Venus, the godess of sexual, the enemy of spiritual, love. In her resentment of the sanctified marriage bond, blessed by the arrival of a child, she probably lurked around for vengeful mischief. "Grash" (sometimes "Kreisch") is interpreted as "Geschrei" (screams) which according to super-imaginative persons had been heard during the cutting of air circles with the knife, depicting the screams of pain suffered by "Holle."

The Bar-Mitzvah, the attainment of Jewish majority, has remained a man's privilege even to this day of woman suffrage. As an old-time advocate of the doctrine of woman's rights, I rejoice in the very recent, but still unpopular, innovation of the induction of the female into the ranks of Jewish citizenship. I am sure that all the men, and even some women of the past would shake their heads in dismay over this radical step. Let us be generous and think that a spirit of gallantry was at the bottom of their attitude, and that they did not wish to add to the manifold responsibilities of woman, the duties imposed upon man, beginning with the

Bar-Mitzvah. The type, adhering to the frozen dogma and static observance, is still very evident and no less stubborn than that of old.

I will only set down the special experiences surrounding my own Bar-Mitzvah, in the month of Nissan, 5647, or April, 1887. My Sedra was Achre Mos-Kedoschim, a merger of two, to fit in the space of the twelve months lunar year. Chazan Kallman was engaged to instruct me and selected the shorter portion set between two long ones. It took quite a bit of insistence on the part of my father to make him add one of the long ones to the one he had chosen. Father won; Chazan sulked; boy suffered. All of it had to be chanted. My boy-soprano voice irked the Chazan. He claimed it was too much that of the Catholic choir-boy. The brakes were set to hold me in. The day came. For weeks preceding it, my mother had been critically ill and could not be present. Emotions were at high pitch as was my voice. I saw my father shed tears only four or five times in my life, and this was one of them.

Before the day was over the people had decided that it would be a sin, for which the Lord would punish, (An Avere) were I not to become a Chazan. Father was convinced, but mother got well and decided otherwise.

There was another dissenting voice, that of Salme Meiss, a good man and friend of the family. His objection to me was based on the premise that a Jewish boy not speaking the

Yiddish-German jargon, and not wearing a head covering at table, was not qualified for such high place in Jewish life. I'm sure the good man, from up above, has followed my career as a Jew, and rejoices more in the reverse result of his prophesy than he would have in the satisfaction of having been right in his prediction.

The day was one of a favorable turn in the condition of my dear mother, and she was spared for twenty-nine happy years after.

Sensational events were the betrothals, especially in cases of the girls. Her native town was as a rule the place for the Gnass. This never came as a great surprise because in the weeks preceding it, the time of negotiation and Beschau (contract of betrothal) meeting of the principles, there were whispers and guesses. In our small and close community the reason for absence from home, or visits from outside, had to be explained, or they were guessed. Most of the matches were made by a Shadchan (marriage broker). Some of these were professionals receiving a definite commission; many, however, did it in an altruistic spirit. When all monetary arrangements had been completed between the parents, the couple was brought together for mutual sizing up. Any known shortcomings would usually be smoothed by extra material compensation. Many humorous tales have come from the process of these negotiations.

An enterprising Shadchan had photographs of his female offerings. The looks deteriorated as the dowories rose. Above 50,000 he showed no pictures. It is an astonishing fact that the proportion of happy marriages at least equalled that of today. I contend that many changes in the status of womanhood and of life in general have to do with the apparent lesser degree of marital successes in our own day.

At the Gnass the nearest of the families came together for a visit of a day or two. A plate was broken in half, each side retaining a part. There are many explanations for this custom, and from it probably sprang that of the breaking of a glass at some wedding ceremonies in these days. Gifts were exchanged by the principles, and the date for the wedding was set. This was usually not far off. The Chosen would visit the bride's family a few times in the interim, the frequency depending on the distance between the respective family seats.

Certain cities had special facilities for weddings. These were not always the larger ones. Some caterers in obscure towns had gained reputations. Another consideration was the bewilderment that guests from small places might have experienced in a large city of, say six or ten thousand inhabitants. Our town of 2200 was very attractive to those from smaller places.

A wedding was a two- or three-day event. The civil

marriage was attended by those immediately concerned and took place on the first day, when the regular guests gradually assembled for the big occasion on the next day. Synagogue services were at noon of the second day. There was sight-seeing, visiting in the early afternoon, dinner, starting in late afternoon and lasting far into the night. Dancing till morning.

I've been told that the term Mezuman-benschen has its origin at wedding banquets. Three males of age are a minimum assembly for this special rendition of the prayers after a meal. The honor of leading in the chanting of this liturgy ordinarily was given to a guest, if one was present, and if not, the male members of the family rotated. At weddings, however, this distinction was auctioned off and awarded to the highest bidder. The yield (the Mezuman, the money) was given to charity.

On the third day, -- headaches, indigestion, gossip, planning of new matches, and whatever else it took to make the hosts feel that a good time was had by all.

Many of the wedding gifts were delivered in person. The term Einwurf for this gift I never appreciated fully until I saw some of my own, that made me feel like having "Ein Wurf" (one throw) of them against the wall. Such was the taste displayed or the spirit they conveyed.

One faux-pas my family innocently made through me in the selection of a wedding gift. The bride's name was

Jeanette Weiss. Her mother's Ettella. Everybody called them by their first names so that the name Weiss was hardly ever associated with them. There was a Madame Weiss, a friend of my mother, to whom I was sent with a catalog of silverware, with the request to Mme Weiss to help mother make a choice of Jeanette's gift. I went to the more obscure Weiss family which, in view of its personal interest in the matter, refused to commit itself. My hurried report at home was that Madame Weiss refused to assist. Only after some weeks of coolness between mother and her friend were matters cleared up. If I am meticulous today, it can be traced to this and some other similar fateful miscarriages of orders.

In their wisdom, the law givers of our people neutralized the custom of food abundance connected with the festivals by the introduction of fasts. I will enumerate them in the rotation of their occurence according to the lunar calendar.

As mentioned above, Erev-Pesach was a fast for the first-born males. Then came Shiva Osor B'Tammuz on the seventeenth day of Tammuz in commemoration of the breaking down of the wall of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, three weeks before the ninth day of Ab.

The Fast of Ab (Tisho B'Ab) followed on the ninth day of the month of Ab commemorating the fall of the first and second temples. This was a day of mourning. Next to Yom Kippur it was considered the most important of the fast days, and its

observance has in one way or another endured to this time. The nine days preceding it were a sort of "Lent" during which no meat was eaten, except on the Sabbath that fell in this period (Schwarz Schabbos). All forms of amusement and most celebrations were tabooed, as were haircuts, shaves, and swimming. On Tisho B'Ab the synagogue interior was draped in black, and worshippers prayed sitting on the floor or on stools with their shoes off. The Book of Lamentations was chanted and the Phylacteries were put on during the afternoon instead of the morning prayers.

Above I said most, not all, celebrations were excluded. A Bris Milah or Bar-Mitzvah called for a special dispensation.

I experienced an amusing incident when my brother Lucien, then a young Rabbi, and I visited our Aunt living in a small town with a Jewish population of about seventy. The cantor there was also a Mohel and occupied himself with other things to eke out a scant living. He had a Scheile (interpretation of the law) to ask. His rich relatives living in the big city asked him to officiate at a Bris Milah which would take place the day before Tisho B'Ab. By that time he would have an eight days growth of beard, and he dreaded to present himself unshaven at this particular function. Was there a loophole in the law thatwould give him relief in this embarrassment?

My brother ruled: "The family is exempt, and if he

he would go as one of the family he could be beautified to his heart's content. If however, he would accept a fee, he would be there in an official capacity only, and this privilege would be denied." He decided there and then that he would go as Mohel and not as Mishpocha.

The Fast of Gedalia is observed the day after Rosh Hashonah. This commemorates the assassination of one of Palestine's most beloved governors.

Asara B'Teves on the tenth day of Teves came next. This commemorates the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

The Fast of Esther was observed the day before Purim, the thirteenth of Adar or V'Adar.

On Erev Rosh-Chodesh, the day before the new moon, a half-day fast was observed.

Most people fasted on their Jahrzeit, unless it fell on a Sabbath or holiday. It was optional with the Parnass (president of the congregation) to impose fast days whenever there was an abnormal amount of sickness in town. Mondays and Thursdays were the days chosen by these proclamations.

Stern disciplinarians like my father would order a fast if a member of their families would drop or deface a book of holy writ. Note the contrast between this degree of respect for a book of prayer and the recent malicious act of the burning of the Mordecai Kaplan revised liturgy.

There were many ceremonies held in particular

localities that were not generally observed. These were probably instituted by rabbis and leaders to commemorate events in their own district or community.

I must not close my account on small town Jewish observances without mentioning Tehillim, reading of Psalms for the critically ill, also Gomel-benschen, a prayer by individuals who have come through a great danger or have had a lucky escape from sickness or accident.

Lastly I mention L'Vonoh Mi Kaddish (Blessing of the New Moon). This ritual took place under the sky, either outside of the synagogue or outside of the home, preferably on the outgoing Sabbath and between the 3rd and the 10th day of the month. In the months of Ab and Tishri, this ceremony was postponed to an evening after the Fast of Ab or Yom Kippur but not later than the 15th or past Full Moon.

My parents, as I have indicated in many places, took the dogmatic part of our religion very seriously, but not more so than the practical application of its tenets and its teachings, -- to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with their God.

I hear a mother's view of life,
Well-founded in belief
That truth must win, but hate and strife
Lead man to direst grief.

A father, undemonstrative,
Always alert and keen
Where service was imperative;
Where life was drab and lean.

Where tortured man in fever's grip
Tossed on his couch of death,
His cooling hand, his praying lip
Stayed on to final breath.

I cherish their pattern of religious and social life as my most precious heritage, and it is my most fervent hope that it may be preserved through the generations to their glory and immortality.

WHEN I SET OUT FOR AMERICA

When I set out for America
In eighteen-ninety-one,
I was given plain instructions
On how things here should be done.

Said my father: "Get up early,
Work all day and save your Gold;
Speak the truth, treat others squarely,
Never hit below the belt.

Have in mind the name you're bearing
Is derived from Holy Writ;
Keep it spotless by your conduct,
As a son of mine befit.

And remember, we are rated
By the company we keep;
And that he who soweth kindness
In return will kindness reap.

And in things of Right and Justice
Be you firm, do not relent,
Yet be tol'rant and forgiving
To offenders who repent.

Though they call you hard and stubborn,
Or peculiar, or severe,
When you're right, don't let them sway you,
To your principles adhere."

Still more eloquent and lasting
Are the things he never spoke,
But enacted by his service
To the poor and stricken folk.

In a manner sacrificial
That needs find its own reward
By the inmost satisfaction
When one serves, through man, his Lord.

In a trembling voice spoke mother:
(We all know how mothers care)
"Of the city's lures and pitfalls,
I beseech thee, son, beware.

Keep you clean in mind and body,
Wash you well behind the ears;
Say your prayers, morn and evening,
God provides, so have no fears.

Should temptation try its witchcraft
On your unsuspecting soul,
Know that every wrong is paid for,
Every sin collects its toll.

I have watched you play and study,
Climb a fence and slide on ice;
In hard work, and risk, and thinking,
You will pay success' price.

Here are needle, thread and thimble,
Homey symbols, and a sign
That a stitch that's timely taken,
In the end may save you nine."

These, their parting words of caution,
Were conceived with true concern,
Had their frequent application
As the wheels of Fate did turn.

Every day, in all the thousands,
Was it happy, gay or sad,
Proved the wisdom and the vision
Of my Mother and my Dad.

May the legend of the Blue Bird
Change to actuality,
And the memories we cherish
Be their Immortality.

I have mentioned the beneficial influence of my grandfather, Moshe Leb Uhry, exercised by virtue of his sincere faith and great affection for humanity, and I am happy to feel

that some of his fine spirit had descended on his son. In the above-quoted verses, I have given a general picture of my father's religious and social service conception, but I must relate one incident that is typical of his understanding of sacrificial service.

In 1869, one of the plagues that periodically visited our country attacked a family of five in our town. Apparently, provisions for the care of the stricken and prevention for the spreading of the contagion were insufficient and lax. My father, a young married man with wife and two children, respectively one and a half and three years old, decided to take care of this family. Another volunteer was the nailsmith of whom I wrote above. They took along food and clothing and quarantined themselves with the stricken household. One of the family died. The two volunteers with the long-distance help of a carpenter and a gravedigger, buried the unfortunate victim. The rest survived. True to form, malicious troublemakers stirred up agitation against the families of these good men, so that they too had to isolate themselves in spite of a strict quarantine maintained by the men.

Without foundation, they accused the two men of visiting their homes in the deep of the night. Such is so frequently the ingratitude of the hysterical mob. It took months before the better sense of the minority dispelled the

fear and made the free circulation of my family again possible. My father never spoke of this, but a friend who 38 years after, stood at his open grave, insisted on relating the incident in the form of a eulogy and farewell.

I have gone into great detail as to the Jewish religious life of my youth because I consider the experience of it of greatest importance in the shaping of my viewpoint on life as a whole, its purpose and fulfillment. The rigor of orthodoxy, its mysticism, the emphasis on sacrificial service, the respect for the traditional, when merged with a spirit of tolerance for the different and an open mind for the unfolding of truth on the march, form a splendid foundation for a philosophy of life that is satisfying, hopeful and comforting.

While it may seem that I have in the years gone far from the original form of observance, my present day manner of religious practice is of the essence of the old, without the elimination of one jot or tittle of its basic substance.

I hope I will not seem immodest if I say that despite bigoted discrimination and pressure from a world that is, alas, still unfriendly to my people, I have retained my self-reverence as a Jew. I find by my own experience, and in my extensive intercourse with others, that the loyal, self-respecting, democratic Jew is outstanding in these qualifications as an American, or as a citizen of any land. I have

found that loyalty to faith and racial self-respect evoke the esteem and confidence of our fellow-men of other religions and races.





The 3 youngest Uhrys in 1864
sitting, Irma, age 3
" Lucien " 12
standing, Edmond " 10

Bed-time stories by Dad

CHAPTER X: EDUCATION

Education was entirely under Government rule, dividing the school population into separate denominational groups, except in communities so small that that would not be practical. This applied to the elementary schools only. In the higher schools (Gymnasium, Real-Schule, Lyceum) classes were mixed, except in religious instruction which was, however, a part of the regular curriculum and compulsory. It was given by the respective ministers of the different faiths.

In our town we had a non-sectarian Kindergarten for those between the ages of three and six. At six the child was taken to one of the lower grade schools of his denomination. There were four Protestant teachers, two Catholic, and one Jewish. We had between seventy-five and eighty pupils in the Jewish school, all in one room, divided into three groups. The compulsory school term was from the sixth through the fourteenth year for boys, and through the thirteenth for girls. Pupils could transfer to the higher schools, taking entrance exams. In the elementary schools, only the German language was taught, while the higher schools included French, Latin, Greek, and English, also the subjects required for eventual entry into a university or technical training school.

We were fortunate to have, at Ingwiller, exceptionally good Jewish teachers for several generations, and the town produced more than its expected allotment of high-ranking professional men, as well as teachers, business men, bankers, poets and musicians.

My attendance in our town school ended when I became twelve years old, and I entered the Quarta (fourth grade) of the Gymnasium at Bouxwiller.

I started Kindergarten at three. I was playful, restless and bored, and managed to escape from class occasionally under one pretext or another. It was difficult to hide away in our small town, and life was lonely in the byways, reducing the lure of the open to a snare and delusion. Despite punishment from several sides, the adventure must have had its attraction, for it was oft repeated.

I can still feel the sensation of pride when one morning ten of us were led in double file from the Kindergarten to the Ecole. Ecole stood for the Jewish school only. The others were called Schule.

Teacher Oppenheimer and his family were our intimate friends. In my first year in elementary school, I spent more time in the dunce-corner than in my seat. I was given up as a hopeless case, disgracing a family that had three winners of scholastic honors. The turning point came when on a Thursday (there was no school on Thursdays) my brother Emile led me home by one ear from one of my favorite haunts, the

tinsmith shop, and made me study the poem I was to memorize, entitled "Der Wind." My brother, impressed with my memory and proud of his accomplishment, watched developments at school the next day. Teacher: "We will now hear the recitation of 'Der Wind'." Twenty hands were up including mine, high above the others. The teacher didn't believe me and called on another boy. Sorely disappointed, I silently swore that I'd never study anything again. My brother managed to get word to the teacher, and I took teacher and school by storm with my version of "Der Wind." The wind became a whirlwind from then on, so that four years after I had stormed to second place from the top in this eight-year course. On the highway of this educational race, I passed several older boys to whom, like to myself, the United States later became our country of adoption. Some of them were exceptionally successful in business, probably saying under their breaths: "He should have the education."

The school hours were many and vacations very few. The daily sessions were, Saturdays and holidays excepted, from eight to four, with one hour for dinner and two recesses of fifteen minutes each. The stopping time for Friday or a day before a Jewish holiday was three o'clock. The purpose of this allowance of time was to be encouragement for a thorough wash behind the ears before the holiday. In those days of water-carrying, this weekly scrubbing was not the least

of the household chores. In summer some of the more resourceful mothers gathered their broods, as they would the family wash, and led them to the brook for a scrubbing and a rinse.

The vacations were from Christmas over the year-end, one week at Easter or Pesach, one week at haying season, and four weeks in August.

Most teachers were men of many talents. The job of the Jewish teachers in communities where all the children between the ages of six and fourteen assembled in one school room was especially difficult. The subjects taught besides the three R's were History, Geography, Literature, Natural History, a smattering of Physics and Chemistry, Drawing, Singing, Religion, and Hebrew. While a special female teacher taught knitting and other needlework to the girls, the boys had calisthenics and drills in the open. Every teacher had to play either the violin or the organ to lead classes in vocal instruction.

My brother Lucien and I were the soloists. His was an alto voice, later degenerating into a basso; mine was a boy soprano, later degenerating.

I was one of the three or four pupils at times selected to be monitors, and I was sure that I wanted to become a teacher. My motives were not altogether those of the consecrated developer of the child mind. Corporal punishment was a privilege of the teacher and was constantly resorted to, especially with the boys. I confess that my attraction

to the profession was probably less inspired by a desire to brighten the mind to understanding and foresight, than to polish the pupils' hind-side.

An annual school excursion of the older children was sanctioned by the authorities but rarely taken advantage of. Objections were raised by families who could not afford the very trivial financial obligation that was involved. Numerous other factors that enter when groups of different strata of society are brought together in a social way, usually led to unpleasant criticism and even personal strife. During my six years at the elementary school we had only one such excursion. The goal was the ruins of Schloss Lichtenberg, a climb of about six kilometres from home, without expense of transportation. Arrangements were made for about sixty at the Inn at Lichtenberg, where the picnic lunch could be eaten and a rest taken before the return trip down the mountain.

To compensate the Inn for its accommodation, drinks were ordered as follows: one glass of raspberry syrup for each girl, one glass of beer for each boy over ten, and half a glass for those under, the expense to be shared equally. The discrimination in this distribution would have been enough to start a town revolution, but added to this was a complication arising from the fact that there were not enough beer tumblers available. The innkeeper decided that two of the smaller boys should drink out of one glass. Drop-splitting at the scene

of origin had brewed to a boiling-over mess, to a foam matching that at the mouth of some of the outraged papas and mamas, when their darlings reported on the matter. Don't shake your head, dear reader. Look about you and in camouflaged form the same human disposition still looms occasionally.

Teacher Oppenheimer, succeeded my Uncle Benjamin Levi. Mr. Oppenheimer came to Ingwiller from Homburg in the Palatinate in April 1872. He died there in about 1902. He had six daughters, four of whom had come to the United States and were married to men in Victoria and Corpus Christi, Texas (the Guggenheimer and Cohen families.) After his death his widow and two younger daughters joined their American family. I have already spoken about the fine influence this man exercised over his pupils, many of whom did him honor in many quarters of this wide world.

When I was eight I was enrolled in a French class of about ten or twelve, organized by Mr. Georges Sutter, teacher of the intermediary Protestant school. I believe the charge per hour was ten cents. After this class disbanded my brother Lucien and I continued with private lessons by Mr. Sutter. In consideration of a lower rate of tuition, we became helpers in his household. He was a bachelor and lived in a house diagonally across the street from us. We ran his errands, carried water, kept his wood-bin filled, cleaned

and filled the lamps and frequently brought in his meals from the Hotel du Soleil next door. He was a good fellow with a fine sense of humor, tall, good looking, wearing a full beard and he was proud of his fluency in the use of Alsatian-Yiddish. He was among the intimates of our family and I still have some letters he wrote to me in 1891. I discontinued the lessons after I entered the Gymnasium, where French was part of the regular curriculum.

My musical education consisted of two short terms in piano, each with a tragic ending. It started when I was fourteen and it was in the month of May. My good-looking young teacher (she was sweet sixteen and had never been kissed) taught me how to use my fingers. She did it so well it went to my arms, so did my teacher. Two hearts in three-quarter time... Irate father, displeased with the tempo, breaks in, beating time with a stick, on my head. I'm a "finished" pianist in ten short lessons.

Resumption of lessons with another good-looking teacher slightly younger than I. This was also of short duration. I had learned to play a simple waltz. After a lesson, in the twilight hour, humming the catchy melody of my new piece, I followed my teacher to the semi-dark kitchen of her home where she had started to mix the pot cheese for the family supper. Inspired by the rhythmic form of music and maid, I decided to dance cheek to cheek with teacher, who

in self-defense dug the spoon, pot cheese and all, in my eye. And here ended my musical education.

The piano was not my instrument and since, as it seems, I had to have something in my lap, I should have taken up the bass fiddle, cello or kettle drum.

My brother Lucien, to be eligible for entry in a higher class of the Gymnasium, had to know a certain amount of Latin. His tutor was the District Surveyor of Highways, who frequently indulged excessively, irrigating the dusty throat he acquired in the pursuit of his profession. For my brother's protection, especially in dry season, I was asked to sit in and if possible pick up a little free Latin on the side. Many of the grammatical rules in the German-Latin textbooks were in verse. I still recall some of them:

"Was man nicht deklinieren kann,
Das sieht man als ein Neutrum an."

or: "Die Lander, Stadte, Flusse, Wind
Und Monat masculina sind."

and more of the same. I learned enough Latin to send innocent notes to the girls, mysterious because not understood:

"Amore, more, ore re
Probatur amicicae"

is innocent enough, but Amore, meaning love, was enough to bring an affected frown or a slight blush to the face of the prim demoiselle of fourteen and a threatening finger to the hand of an over-cautious parent.

Even then we had the idea of the present pig-Latin, and my brother and I invented a private language that was a Latinized German. This was not entirely original with us, for I remember the German sentence that became Latin-sounding by the shift of accent and the joining of words. It goes like this:

"Maus Mehl/ass, Reh Kohl/frass, Kuh/klee/fand, Den/sie/ass" Separate the words, as shown, by vertical lines and it is perfect German.

Modern humorists have frequently indulged in this sort of paraphrasing, as shown in the climax of the following story:

A sedate, middle-aged woman brought a gift of several hundred dollars to her priest, stating that they were a lucky haul made at the race track, when Leviticus, a hundred-to-one shot, came in. The priest refused to accept this tainted money and expressed astonishment at the fact that she, a woman of refinement and culture, should mix with common folk like bookmakers. "Why Father," she protested, "they were men of education and breeding. They conversed among themselves in the language of our holy writ. I heard one of them say to the other: 'Jesus, Markus, Leviticus wrecked us.'"

CHAPTER XI: PLAY

It is hard to believe that a youngster whose life is filled with the many duties of the home, school, church and synagogue, would have time for play. And yet we had our full share of this. Every season brought its special kind. Springtime meant spinning of tops, making of fifes out of the bark of sap-filled wood, shooting marbles, rolling hoops, catching and collecting for no good purpose Maikaefer, a brown bug appearing in May on the newly leaf-bedecked trees.

Summer brought the haying-season. Trampling down the hay in the loft was fun and yielded a little pin-money. Another remunerating pastime for a few specialists, including me, was the collection of wild flowers and blossoms that we dried and sold as curative teas. I name Kamillen (camomile) Hollunder, Lindenblossoms, a few of these.

The season for fishing opened in June. Our brooks must have been the ichthyological orphanage of the larger streams because I never saw a fish in them more than six inches long. Their parents had either died or deserted them.

July and August brought bathing, also long days with extended twilight hours, most propitious for games of hide-and-seek. In the latter game I held the record. I managed to squeeze into a chicken-coop but lost the knack at my

attempted exit. When the frightened, feathered inhabitants drowned my S.O.S. with their hysterical screams, the neighbors, sure of the visit of the sly fox they read about in their fables, reached for their shotguns. I was rescued, only to face trial without defense the next morning. My father arose early, fried his eggs on one side, and turned me over.

There were war games in the fields and woods, foot races, tree climbing, pole vaulting, etc., etc. A broken arm due to an unsuccessful attempt to walk along a two-inch ledge on the outer wall of the city hall is only a memory, but a scar on my forehead that has become visible with the receding of my hair, is an everlasting souvenir of a victorious stone battle. The harvesting of walnuts brought several games, where they served as the stake in a marksmanship contest similar to shooting marbles.

Each generation produces its bullies. We had ours who thrived on their superior strength and trickery. One oft-worked trick was to have each player put up his stake and out of a clear sky make a trumped-up claim of shortage. Up went the cry of "Helmelchay" which means "grab yours" or all you can, leaving the hesitating or trusting Schlemiels out in the cold. The chief offender in this in my own time was a young man several years my senior. Later on he came to the United States, became a leading, successful citizen in a Western town, and a man of high integrity and well-deserved esteem. He used to prey on my older brothers until my

diplomatic mother, for a suitable reward, made him their chaperone. The German axiom fitting this incident is: "Den Bock zum Gartner machen" (naming the billy-goat as gardener.)

According to rule, I should have become a gambler or at least a Wall Street speculator, if one of the ventures that I conceived and operated would have been the demoralizer that child psychologists today would brand it to be. I collected pictures and cancelled stamps and placed them between the pages of a book, leaving a blank after each insert. For payment of a stake, preferably penpoints, walnuts or marbles, an agreed amount of stabs in the book were allowed. The find on the stabbed page belonged to the player and had to be immediately replaced by me in kind. I made honest book. There were others competing in the same field.

For a week or two in late August or September, the crop of hops was cut and its fruit had to be picked. This was an opportunity for money-making and also a sort of picnic outing. Some growers brought the cut hops to town in bundles and the pickers worked at home or on the premises of the owners. My brother and I preferred to work in the fields. This meant taking along food and drink for the day. The sweet cider season ran currently with hop harvesting. I have often wondered whether the money earned ever covered the cost of victuals required to still the appetites stimulated by this

fresh-air occupation. We received two cents for filling a fairly large basket topped by a sloping tower of the hops. The soft hops would sink in the basket under the weight of that piled on top. It would take expert handling to minimize this receding process, but we knew all the tricks. The stem of the fruit had to stay attached or else the pollen, the chief component, would have run out. We however, had our own techniques that sped up production. Nothing less than sixteen cents as earnings for a day would satisfy us. If it ever was more, we were under suspicion from the employer. I doubt that our earnings would have been sufficient to buy the necessary amount of Jergens Lotion to bring our discolored fingertips back to normal.

Early winter brought lasting ice and snow, and our games ranged from harmless tobogganing, coasting and sliding, to snowball battles. The days were short and playtime was limited. I have not mentioned all the forms of play, nor have I spoken of those especially devised for the girls, like softball, rope jumping and the ring-around-a-rosy type. Somehow the girls were not as liberally provided with play as the boys, having to assume household responsibilities at an early age, and learning the many needle crafts.

I have given much attention to the games and play to show how full could be the life of a youngster in a small town. The fretting parents of today would look askance on

the nature and form of the recreation of that day. Faulty and primitive as they were, there must have been enough balancing factors to neutralize some of the ill effects, for child delinquency, I believe, was less than it is now, and we refer with justified pride to some of the men and women that sprang from that age and influence.

Simplicity of life, a sense of responsibility to family and community, respect for elders and above all a sincere regard for religion apparently were steadying forces, guarding against serious wrong-doing.

Today's facial makeup, dress, and other sense-exciting fashions and customs, conventional though they may seem, probably outrank in damaging effect the flaws in youth guidance of that day.

Life in our town was an open book and very little was secret or sacred. We knew every cow that would have a calf, and also to whom and when a baby would be born. Our close and intimate touch with all of life and nature gave us an advantage over the city-bred youngster. More of life, in vaster form and with greater speed, unfolded before him, but he was more or less aloof from most of it.

CHAPTER XII: EARLIEST IMPRESSIONS OF SERIOUS FAMILY EVENTS

I must refrain from philosophical comment, a matter in which I consider myself a poorly qualified amateur, and confine myself to the relating of the things and circumstances affecting me personally. I trust that this will not be branded as egotism. I'm writing all this for home consumption chiefly. Any child of the present or unborn generations, with enough spirit of family loyalty and the will and patience for research in ancestral history will pardon the amount of personal reference that is necessarily made.

In this chapter I wish to record the more intimate incidents in my close family circle that have left their indelible impression on me. In 1891, when I was seven, Merle, my father's mother, passed away at age eighty-one. I recall the depression I felt when we were awaiting the end in the room outside of the alcove in which she breathed her last. I was permitted to be in the funeral procession, headed by the older school boys. I remember some of the eulogies spoken by two rabbis. Grandmother had resided alone in the house she had entered as a bride. Father and his sisters sat Shiva there and a stream of visitors from near and far, Jews and Gentiles, impressed me deeply. I was a part of all this, proud of being of the group receiving this attention. My

father's two sisters had come to Ingwiller from their homes. His brothers, one in Bordeaux, France, the other in Pelotas, Brazil, could not attend.

There was an estate to be administered. In the absence of power of attorney from the son in Brazil, the Surrogate sealed up the Secretaire in which estate matters were placed. It was impressed upon me that this seal must not be touched until the Surrogate would return after the arrival of documents from Brazil. This was awaited by me with great impatience for I knew that in that Secretaire there was a nigh-full box of chocolates that had recently arrived from Bordeaux. When all estate matters were in order, my aunts returned for the division of it.

When I last visited my mother's home in Ingwiller in 1911, there was still a good stock of table and bed linen there that came from grandmother and was a part of her trousseau, assembled about 1830. The Secretaire also became a part of our furniture.

My mother's father, Lazard Klein, died in March 1882 at age seventy-four. I never saw my grandfather outside of his home. He was bedridden for several years with an infected foot, a condition aggravated by diabetes. He was evidently in poor health for many years. I assume this from the fact that, accompanied by my mother, he went for cures to Baden-Baden where only the very rich or a few of the very sick would go. I know that grandfather chiefly qualified under

the latter status.

I remember carrying a Purim gift to him, and being awakened out of my sleep on that night by the alarm calling my parents to his deathbed. He was in a coma for several days. They called it Starrkrampf.

By this double loss, one following the other by an elapse of six months, a term of eighteen months of mourning had befallen our house. This meant daily morning and evening synagogue attendance, the elimination of all but ceremonial song and music, the wearing of garments of somber hue and abstenance from anything that bordered on the frivolous.

We may rightfully look with contempt upon the hypocrisies and superstitions connected with death, but many of the prohibitions of that day bore fruit in the lesson of self-denial as well as the stimulation of a sense of family adherence and loyalty.

The arrival of Irma, our only sister, brought quite a change in our household. Emile, our oldest brother, had started work with Meyer Freres, the bankers. The three other boys had to take on additional home duties. Irma was born in March. During summer vacation we were asked to take her, in her carriage, to cool spots in the neighboring woods. My brother Moise, our "Fuehrer" on one such outing, conceived the idea to hitch four of us "slaves" to the carriage and race back into town. We reached home, one pillow and a baby

missing. Before we had time to collect our wits, a townsman brought in the live bundle he had picked up in the soft soil on the roadside.

Moise, at fourteen, was entered as apprentice with Gerson Dehneider, operating a clothing store located Unter den Gewerbslauben at Strasbourg. Placing an apprentice was a matter of written contract between parents and employers, the family paying a tuition fee. In this case the term of contract was three years. The employee received board, lodging, and oft times a slap in the face or a kick in the anatomy to limber him up. A part of Moise's commercial training consisted of pulling into the store the passerby, some willing, some resisting. Some of our townspeople visiting the big city would rejoice in bringing good news of brother's progress. One kind gentleman went out of his way to tell us that he saw brother filling in for one of the dummies, wearing a frock coat marked down "special."

After much abuse, Moise escaped from his job in the middle of one night. There was great consternation on his arrival home, on foot, in the wee hours of the morning. There were threats by the employers of a damage suit for breach of contract.

He next secured a job at Verdun (Meuse) with the wholesale silk firm of Lang and Cahen. He made rapid strides there and was sent on the road travelling by horse and wagon.

His territory comprised the Ardennes Mountains. On his visits home I hung on every word of his stories of adventure, describing winter travel through this district and hair-raising encounters with wolves and bears.

An unpleasant memory of those days is the simple matter of a letter he wrote to a girl friend travelling with a theatrical troupe in the African French colonies. This letter had been forwarded from place to place, and due postage was put on with each move. After many weeks it finally was returned to our home, covered with rare black and white French colonial stamps. Moise, by that time, had left his Verdun position to prepare for his departure to the United States. When this mysterious letter arrived he was on a farewell trip among our out-of-town relatives. There was great tension on his return home. Payment of the due postage would have been enough to provoke the anger of a stern parent, but the revealed contents of the letter brought argument to fever heat and the prophecy that in the wilderness of the America of the 1880's, a gay Lothario like he would come to no good end. Our mother's heart was extra heavy at parting, and ardent pleas were made to our older brother who had preceded him here, and to all the people we knew in this country, to keep an eye on this wayward son. He turned out to be a big man in New York life and American business.

I was not quite ten years old when my oldest brother

Emile left for America in March 1884. The German laws with reference to emigration affecting males specified that a request for exclusion from the German Union had to be filed before the age of seventeen. This was called securing an Entlassungs-Urkunde. When granted, departure had to be made within six months from the date of issue, otherwise permission would be revoked and the person's name retained on the list of eligibility for military service at age twenty.

There was some slip-up in Emile's case. Two days before Pesach, it was discovered that the time of grace would expire on the first day of Pesach. No preparations for travel equipment and steamship accommodation had been made. It was decided that he must leave home before sunrise the next morning, which was Erev Pesach. A good friend assisted in this, taking him not to the railroad station nearest our town, but one farther away, from where he could not be so easily traced. He went to Romanswiller to our aunt, and there after the holiday, our parents met him with his bag and baggage. He then went on to France and embarked from Le Havre to the United States.

The authorities were very prompt in checking up on his time of departure and destination, but all went smoothly.

Seeing him and my mother at the side of my bed through sleepy half-open eyes and mumbling a brief disgruntled sound that was to be my goodbye, is still a faint memory. I

vividly recall the gloom at the Seder table with the empty chair of the first-born, and also the feeling of responsibility I shared through the importance of secrecy in this matter.

Parents of this era wonder how those of that day could bring themselves to send to the four corners of the earth their teen-age boys. Each mile of distance equalled ten of today. Ocean travel was slow and dangerous and the expectation of a Wiedersehn more remote than now. And yet nearly every family in our town sent boys out into the world. Greater opportunity and more freedom in new lands was an inducement, but taken less into account in making the decision than was the fact of compulsory military service.

Three years of this was looked upon with great dread. We lived in frontier country in an atmosphere charged with Prussian militarism. We were a people resentful of the injustices of the Bismarkian system and continually fearful of the recurrence of war. Escape from this by their sons took the sting out of the pain of parting, and there was in some cases the hope for an eventual permanent family reunion on the ground staked out by their pioneering sons.

The United States and a few of the South American countries held the greatest attraction for them. Wherever one from a town would settle, others from the same district would join him. New Orleans was the first point of destination for most of the early emigres from our section. Some

of our family came there in pre-Civil War days. The French atmosphere of Louisiana appealed to them. I was thrilled to find in the Building of Inventions and Patents at the Century of Progress Fair in 1939, the facsimile of a steam engine, patented in 1852 by a Uhry, resident of Louisiana. Cincinnati also became a point of vantage and long preceded New York as a place of settlement. Through business and marriage they spread out through the South.

My brother Moise came to New York in 1886. I still can feel the state of anxiety that hung over the family during the ten days of his crossing. About that time there had been a fatal accident on the Atlantic. Mother prayed throughout the days and nights. When a cable announced his safe arrival in New York, I galloped through the streets to broadcast the good tidings.

CHAPTER XIII: MY HIGH SCHOOL DAYS

This shrinking of the home circle had a very sobering effect on me. There were other contributing factors of which I will speak in a later chapter. Up to that time I had been a playful, restless, adventure-seeking youngster. I preferred haylofts and high walls and tree tops as playgrounds. I should have been on the payroll of the doctor or at least received free treatment of my own sprains and pains, for I supplied him with many cases of injury to my pals and followers. In spite of all this time-consuming play, I was a good student and at age twelve passed the entrance examinations to the Quarta (fourth grade) of the Real-Gymnasium at Bouxwiller.

My brother Lucien had entered the Quinta (fifth grade) of the Gymnasium the year before. His courses included Latin and while he was nearly two years my senior and a much better scholar, I entered the Quarta the grade corresponding with his in the next year. In two subjects, history and singing, our classes were merged, a matter that placed me at a slight disadvantage. It is always a handicap to walk in the shadow of a great father or a brilliant brother, and Lucien ranked high.

Bouxwiller is about five kilometres (three and one half miles) from our town. The dirt wagon-road was a succession of steep ascents and descents and a tiring course for a

boy of twelve to cover twice a day with a knapsack of school books and supplies strapped to his back.

School assembled at eight-thirty, and with the exception of Thursday and Saturday, class sessions lasted until four P.M. This meant rising at six A.M. for morning prayers, coffee and rolls, and at least an hour's steady march, to be on the class line that formed at eight twenty-five sharp. A great deal of homework together with the expenditure of much of my surplus energy, also the realization that all this was serious business, brought a great change in me. The restless, playful boy of yesterday was suddenly transformed into the serious, grinding student, relapsing, however, to his true old form on occasion, to which the following little episode will testify.

Now and then the kindly driver of a team would give us a lift, at least on the descending parts of the road. However, one brewery in our town laid down the fast rule that no riders were to be taken on its vehicles. To be fair to this brewer, in spite of the fact that out of his family in the next generation sprang the Quisling who welcomed the Nazis when they invaded our town in June 1940, I could in later years see slight justification for this rule.

A flock of boys and girls between twelve and fifteen climbing on a loaded truck caused some inconvenience and even an occasional accident by a rolling barrel.

The trucks had strong brakes that were operated from the rear. One wet morning a conveyor of the brew caught up with us at the crest of a hill, cracking the whip in warning. The brakes were set. As he started over the top a sudden impulse overpowered me. I opened the brakes; the momentum of the rolling load overtook the horses, and off the road into a ditch overturned the horses, man and load. I got away taking a shortcut through the meadows and reached school on time. The expected hour of reckoning weighed heavily on my mind that day.

On my return home my father, with the driver's complaint in hand, took me on his knee in reverse and -------. To appease the driver and his employers, they were all authorized to take the matter of further payment into their own hands, and they did, as I well remember.

This incident in itself would hardly deserve special mention as one surpassing any of the hundreds of other boyish pranks, were it not for another that occurred ten years later 3500 miles away from the scene of the first, proving how small the world is after all.

I was one of several guests at Sunday dinner with friends in Newark, New Jersey. Our host, to show us the Oranges with their beautiful country estates, ordered a conveyance. On discovery that the party exceeded the seating capacity, I asked to sit with the coachman. From the conversation we started, I could tell that the gentleman hailed from

some part of the southwest corner of the Reich. He named Strasbourg as his native place. The inferiority-complexed village yokels always claimed the big city as their own. Under further pressure he named Ingwiller as it, remarking: "You never heard of that." Said I: "I went to school with a boy from there at Bouxwiller."

Driver: "What name?"

My reply: "Uhry."

Driver: "Which one? Emile, Moise, Lucien or Edmond? I know them all."

Reply: "Edmond."

Driver: "That Wackes!" (vagabond) I must tell you what he did to me many years ago."

He told me the episode of the runaway on the hill, and his face reflected the agonizing fright at its beginning as well as the satisfaction that came to him at meting out the desserts so much deserved by the culprit. I then asked him to look back, pointing at my brother who was inside of the carriage. He remarked: "He could be Emile!" He was. Then I asked him to look at me and imagine the mustache removed. Stunned for a few seconds, he burst out: "You son-of-a-gun!"

My new mood and manner at first worried the folks and busybody calamity-Janes brought in all sorts of comforting tales about the dangers of over-study.

At Bouxwiller we had to have a place where we ate

our lunches, stayed in the interim between morning and afternoon classes, kept our books and lived as full-time boarders from Friday morning to Saturday evening.

Ingwiller was beyond the limit of distance (Erev) allowed by Jewish law for travel on the Sabbath. Having classes on Saturday made it necessary for us to stay over Friday night. At first I boarded at the house of Mme Julie Levy. There were about fifteen boys there; we bunked from two to five in a room. Meals on weekdays consisted of soup, meat and vegetables. They were raised to banquet level on Friday evening and Saturday noon by additions of delicious desserts and a glass of wine. I state these details, appearing trivial, to give the reader an idea of the purchasing power of the money of that day. I paid ten cents for each of the lunches, and fifty cents total for the dinners on Friday night and Saturday noon, coffee and cake for breakfast and a snack, like jelly-bread or fruit on Saturday afternoon. Total per week, four marks or one dollar (based on 1886 exchange rate). Friday night lodging and week around privileges of the house were thrown in gratis.

Mme Levy subsequently retired ("verce-tired") and joined her sons living in Paris. I saw her last in Paris in 1891 on my way to New York.

We were fortunate that a Mme Scheye was willing to take over this lucrative business, and having larger facilities, added a female dormitory. Mme Scheye came from Freiburg

in Baden and more than matched the culinary art of Mme Levy. She was assisted by her teacher-husband in maintaining peace and order in this large and mixed family. The Scheyes had a daughter Bertha, and a son Ernest. Ernest studied jurisprudence, and on inquiry among recently arrived refugees, I was told that he held a judgeship in Silesia in pre-Nazi days. Among my souvenirs I treasure a leather wallet given me by this family at the time of my departure to America.

It is easy to see the effect this great change in my mode of living had on me. From a one-man school, after six years, to the departmental Real-Gymnasium, facing from six to nine teachers who taught the many subjects in the curriculum, subjects with high-sounding names like Geometry, Algebra, Trigonometry, Chemistry, Physics, French and English. It was a matter of meeting and competing with fellow students from dozens of towns, Christians and Jews, rich and not so rich. The poor had little chance to participate in higher education, due to the charge of a tuition fee, the cost of books, better dress, and the boarding house necessity for those not residing in the college town. While some of us did not even belong to the "not so rich class" we were there by the resolute will of parents that sacrificed in many ways to give opportunity of education to their children.

I started with a class of twenty-eight which diminished each year, since under a stringent system of grading

approximately twenty-five percent was left behind annually. For this and other reasons many of the starters dropped out. My brother's estimate during my first term placed me in the second third of my class, a disgraceful situation that preyed somewhat on the mind of my ambitious mother, already worried over the effect of this change of school on her youngest.

"Time will tell" was the slogan of the moment. It did tell when the reports of scholastic standing were distributed for the first term ending at Christmas. On that day a blizzard compelled my first absence from school. Only one of my classmates from my town braved the storm. He brought my report late that night, after most of my family had retired. "Your son ranks second among twenty-eight!" Great joy, bringing tears even to the eyes of my stern father. There, in one short second, I was raised to the level of proper respect by a doubting family.

I maintained the rank of second throughout the four years with one exception, when for one term I slipped to fourth. The detracting factor was a state of mind I had developed during the piano lessons mentioned before. My best subjects were Mathematics, Physics, and Composition in the three languages I took. My poorer ones were Botany, History, and, note, Religion. I, the brother of a Rabbinical student, deficient in the study of Religion. Like the successful

department store owners I mentioned before, I now say: "They should have the religious education!" Despite it, in due time, I became Trustee of one of America's largest and foremost congregations. I raised one daughter to become the wife and helpmate of one of the outstanding Rabbis and Leaders in American Jewish life, and best of all, the mother of my three grandsons, the oldest of whom unhesitatingly has chosen to devote himself to the cause of our People, and as Rabbi to follow the compelling call of his soul.

This is not a freak of nature or accident but I believe, the ripening fruit from a tree rooted in fertile soil and nurtured through decades by a spirit of loyalty to and deep faith in a great cause.

After my first year at the Real-Gymnasium, Lucien entered the Rabbinical Seminary at Colmar and attended the Lycee there. His absence from home had a depressing effect on me. We had been together in everything but play. He was the calmer of the two. A case of pneumonia with a serious relapse, frequent attacks of jaundice, bronchitis and nose bleeds disfranchised him from the participation in our rough games. With three brothers absent, and the realization that my day of decision was approaching, I became super-sober.

I was a few years below the average age of my class. When I returned after the summer recess, my teachers, according to rule, had to address me with the personal pronoun "Sie"

instead of the "Du." This had an unpleasant effect on me. This new form of address cooled the feeling of congeniality that had developed between some of us during the first year. It also made me, the thirteen-year-old, feel that now I am a man, expected to conduct myself as such and to assume adult responsibility.

In the second year we started English and Chemistry. I wanted to learn enough English in a short time to be able to write a letter in that language to my two brothers in America. With the sweat of my brow I assembled the vocabulary for my introductory sentence to my first letter, which read: "Already a long time ago I wanted to write to you a letter in English once."

Before long I had the audacity of correcting the grammar in my oldest brother's correspondence. Emile picked up his English in night school and among his fellow workers--immigrants from many European lands. He got angry at my corrections. When I joined him here three years later, I was shocked in the first days to hear him say "Where did Sam went?" Twenty-seven years after when he became a part of my business family, he asked for the whereabouts of Arthur, an employee, saying "Where did Arthur went?" sounding his w's as v's, as in the good old days.

In the beginning of the third High School year a railroad between Ingwiller and Bouxwiller was completed. This was of great importance to us, eliminating the ten

kilometres daily walk. My father, who only respected the sort of accomplishment that was made by hard physical labor, at first thought that the luxury of riding would have an ill effect on me and should be indulged in during the winter months only. He was won over, however, by the majority viewpoint, but not for long.

On a winter morning a window was open in the coach that was assigned to the travelling students, and the car was very cold. Another boy and I together made an unsuccessful attempt to shut the window. Our reputations as strong men were at stake. We tried it again, all muscles strained; up went the window and out the pane, in a thousand splinters. The cost of damage was three marks (seventy-five cents.) The station-master at Bouxwiller held us until payment was made. To cover the cost, the herculian team was ordered to hit the old trail of snow and ice for one month.

In my third year (Secunda) we started Trigonometry, used logarithm tables, also studied Biology and Physics. In German we read Schiller, Goethe, Lessing and Uhland. In French, Moliere, Racine, Rousseau, and Voltaire. Much poetry had to be learned by heart. Long poems like Schiller's "Glocke," Goethe's "Spaziergang," "Die Burgschaft," "Des Sanger's Fluch," and others.

In this year I wrote a nigh-fateful sentence in a composition on the liberation of the Swiss people from the

yoke of Austria, based on Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell." I had emphasized the tortures and cruelties inflicted by the Austrian monarchy in a manner that annoyed my monarchist teacher, who referred the matter to the Pomeranian Dean who read lese majesty into my treatise. The Pomeranian sent for me, barked and snapped at me, slapped me, drawing blood, and suspended me.

The Mayor of our town, who did not like Pomeranians, championed my cause. My defender's meeting with the "brute," ended in a fist fight. After a hearing before the higher-ups the final result was my honorable reinstatement and the Dean's humiliating demotion to a less desirable post.

This unpleasant incident later became a deciding factor in the choice of my vocation. The study of engineering seemed consistent with my special talents and was advocated by my teachers. This profession was largely Government-controlled. Wiser council, together with my own instinctive apathy for anything so directly under German government dominion, fortunately guided me into different channels. Instead of now being a captive in one of the hell-holes, or a fragment in the ash heaps that are the bestial accomplishment of the savages, I am happily breathing the air of a free land, part of a civilization that will exterminate the would-be exterminators of all that is human, decent and democratic.

In my fourth year (Prima) no new subjects were added, but none of the old ones were discontinued, and all

were compulsory. Preparation for the comprehensive examinations that were to be held through the month of June, necessitated the burning of a great deal of midnight oil.

The Schulrat (District Head of Education) attended the verbal examinations. One third of the class failed. Those passing received the Einjahrich-Freiwilligen Zeugniss. The holder of this diploma was pronounced mentally qualified to complete the regular two-year military training in one and was allowed to choose the service he wanted to be in.

The faculty consisted of about fourteen men holding titles from Professor-Doctor through Oberlehrer, ordentlicher Lehrer (regular or registered teacher) to Probe Kandidat (tutor). A Director presided over all. Each one had an appropriate nickname derived from some special physical or other peculiarity. One, coming to a bulge in the middle of his anatomy, was "der Bratwurst." (the sausage) Another with similar maldistribution of flesh and fat was called "der Wangst." (belly) They came from all parts of Germany and each group brought with it special native habits, accents, and manner of speech. With few exceptions they were good disciplinarians. The South-Germans and Alsatians were most congenial to us. I was lucky in my relationship with two of the tyrants that were most feared by the pupils. Fate favored one of my classmates and me when, on our way home after dark, we found one of these gentlemen "slightly" inebriated in a

ditch beside the road. We arranged for his safe transportation home. The next day I asked about his sprained ankle and told him of the many accidents that had happened at that very spot. We were understanding friends ever after.

The other one was a stern, unfriendly bachelor. (I mention bachelor because there was a rumor that he was of a family of bachelors, and that his own father had been one.) One dark Friday night I was sent out to call the doctor for one of our fellow-boarders. Carrying a lantern (a sin on the Sabbath) I took a short cut through a narrow alley, rarely used, and there was ordentlicher Lehrer X, in the very focus of my lantern, in an unordentliche (indecent) clinch with one of the robust peasant maids of the town. I had been a B student in his subject; from then on, I received an A mark. I had the distinction of knowing something that only the teacher and I knew.

My most unforgettable teacher was Oberlehrer August Krag, of Alsatian birth and character. He taught languages and was a real encyclopedia for general information. He was a fine teacher and when in good humor, spoke the native jargon in class, defying in this all rules. Sometimes he was in different mood and despite his good heart would lose his temper, smash an inkwell, split furniture, or throw a book. He was the intimate friend of Mr. Sutter, my home-town French teacher and with him often visited our house. On the theory that

others could afford to waste money on the education of their sons but that my father could not, he was doubly strict with me. Many times when I did not do so well, he would delegate me to take his books to his home. There he would lecture to me, pulling my ears to remove any obstacle that might have blocked the channels of my logical reasoning at the time. He would then call Julie, his wife, to serve coffee and jelly-bread and send me on my way.

One serious confab developed between us in connection with a French composition. In our garret we had some French books that were my uncle's thirty-five years before. I did not realize that the works of Erckmann-Chatrian were so well known, and I helped myself in a liberal way to several paragraphs that did not match the Uhry literary style surrounding them.

Not wishing to humiliate me in class, and suspecting that I would try to disprove my plagiarism, he asked me to come to his house. When I got there I soon felt that all was not well. He asked for a statement of fact. I was neither spontaneous nor convincing, and he impressed me with the seriousness of the offense with a good thrashing. This was against school-rules, but in perfect order with a visitor especially invited to the house for the purpose. I realized in later years that this was one of the most important moments in my education.

Other favorite teachers were Doctors Herrgesell and

Schaefer in Mathematics and Physics; also Fritz Magnus (note the familiarity) old enough to be my grandfather, often holding up as an example my Uncle Isaac Uhry whom he taught forty years before. His kindness and good nature evoked a chumminess that made you think of him as the original "Ami Fritz."

I believe I was a good mixer for I associated with a great number of boys of varying traits. I never forsook those who were left behind, a matter contrary to the usual spirit of subtle contempt for him in a lower class, persisting as a sort of tradition to this day. Ask any Freshman. Some of these associations were based chiefly on the mutual scholastic interest, others were altogether social. In one of these groups I tried to learn the smoking of all kinds of freakish pipes, preferably those with long drop stems and porcelain bowls. I never succeeded well, but puffed along and paid the penalty. This probably accounts for my dislike of the saxophone. This experience, together with that when, at age nine, I stole one of my father's one and one-half cent Perfectos, should have cured all my craving for the weed, forever, but it didn't.

In the scholastic group I want to mention Jules Willard from my home town. We started and finished school together, lived in the same boarding-house at Bouxwiller. Our families owned adjoining places in the synagogue, and yet we never played together. The fact that our fathers were

competitors in business and that we were rivals in the class-rank would account for much of this social aloofness. Jules throughout school was first, I was second, with the one exception already mentioned. When I slumped to fourth, he moved down to third. I think he copied some of the mistakes I had made in my mathematics homework. He excelled in other subjects but had slightly the better of the bargain. There was less risk in copying a mathematical problem than there was in composition, even from authors less important than Erckmann-Chatrian. In the social group there were Paul Petri, Gustav Bollag, Jean Riehl.

Petri, whose family owned the large Chemical Works at Bouxwiller, was not much of a student. He lived in a palatial home, set in the midst of landscaped gardens. I was fascinated by the turkeys and peacocks that strutted about their large poultry yards. I was envied for the privileges I enjoyed in the freedom of house and grounds, including unrestricted rights to the berries and fruits grown there. It was at Petri's where the smokers were held. I never saw him again after I left home.

Gustav Bollag lived opposite the school and held the record for tardiness. His family left for America when he was in the third year. He returned to Europe after a few years and settled at Zurich, Switzerland. Together with his brother and sister he became a dealer in art and was well-known

throughout Europe. Later on he spent a year in New York where he and his sister exhibited and sold some paintings. I saw a great deal of him during his stay here and I am indebted to him for some of the snappiest humorous stories that I have in my repertoire. We spent two days with him at Zurich in 1931. I hope he is well and safe there now.

Richl was the son of a locomotive engineer on the Saverne-Maguenau Line. I believe he studied engineering. I have lost track of him.

There were others: Grunewald, Stephan, Albert Meyer; each contributing something in the way of virtues and vices to be imitated or avoided.

Altogether this group was drawn from many quarters, raised under a variety of influences and served as a fine laboratory in the cultivation of the art of living with others.

Graduation exercises were held on a Saturday morning in late July taking very much the form of present day commencements. I was chosen to show off the efficiency of the Department of English. My recitation entitled "William Tell," spoken in the best Westphalian-Alsatian-English accent, won the applause of all, though eighty percent of the audience didn't understand a word of it.

During the afternoon the class held a "Commers," a brawl indulged in by German university students. This meant barrels of beer, fancy stone Seidels with lids, drinking in

rhythmic tempo on direction of an elected commander whose capacity had to be matched, or else -- under the table. The penalty for non-compliance was demotion to the rank of Fuchs (fox). The foxes had to do the waiting at table and had to abstain from drinking for the duration of their sentence. Singing of Gaudeamus Igitur, Edite, Bibite (Latin drinking songs) speeches and comedy in many reels, ending in a staggering climax at a late hour of the day.

Reviewing the four years at the Real-Gymnasium at this time, I can say that the training was thorough preparation for the pursuit of any vocation. When I came here in 1891 I was shocked at the rapid pace in which subjects were superficially taught here, especially the foreign languages. Ours was slower but, I venture to say, more thorough. Summing it up I will say we learned how to study, how to systematize and arrange our time, how to help ourselves in research, and above all how to think and reason logically.

But what had become of all the logic, education and cultural development when the poison of the Nazi snake in the shaping of a "superior" ideology reduced super-civilization to the depths of demonic and bestial savagery?

The miles of poetry we had to memorize for which I saw little use then, developed the kind of memory capable of retaining many of the minute details related herein.